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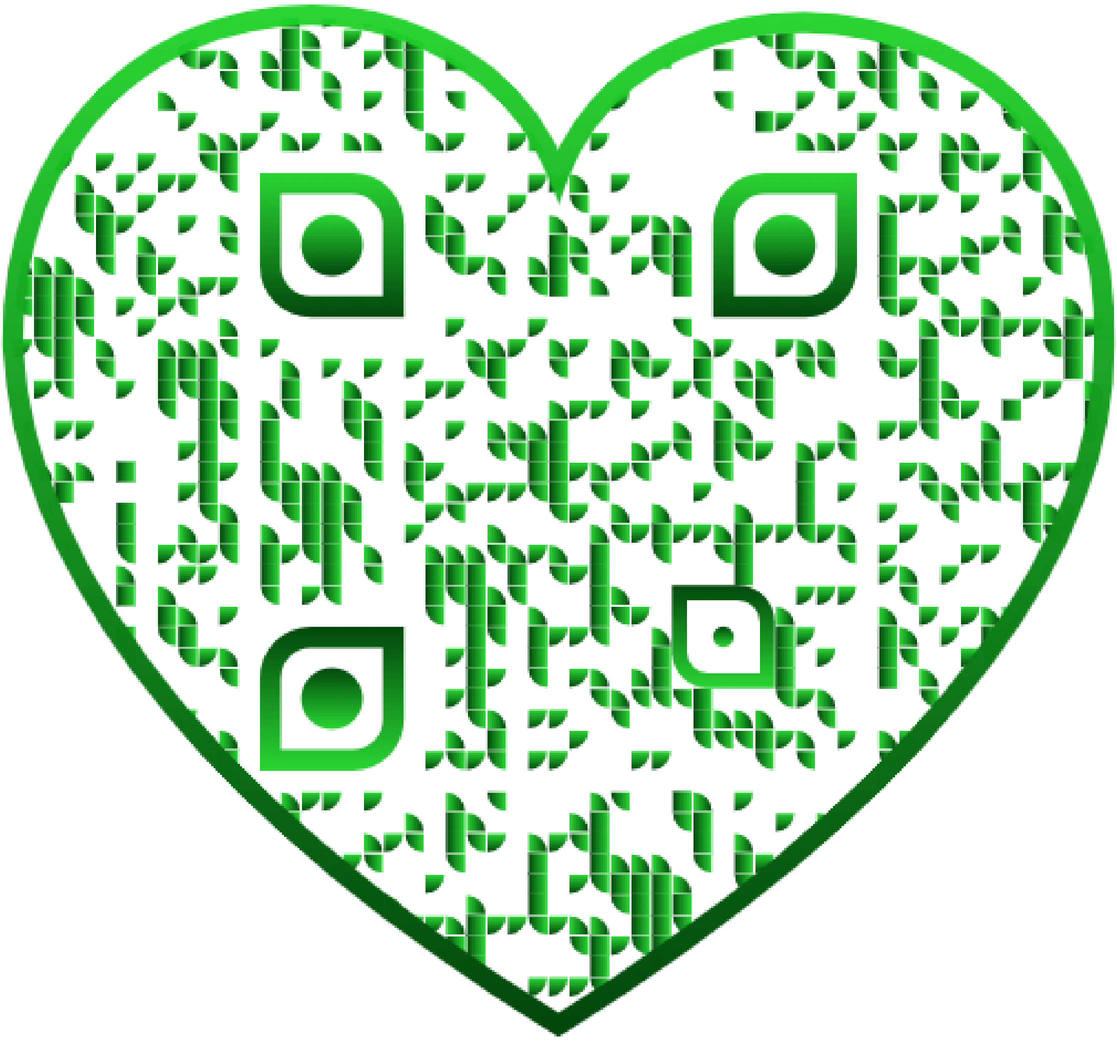
- ROAD TRIPPING THE NSW SAPPHIRE COAST



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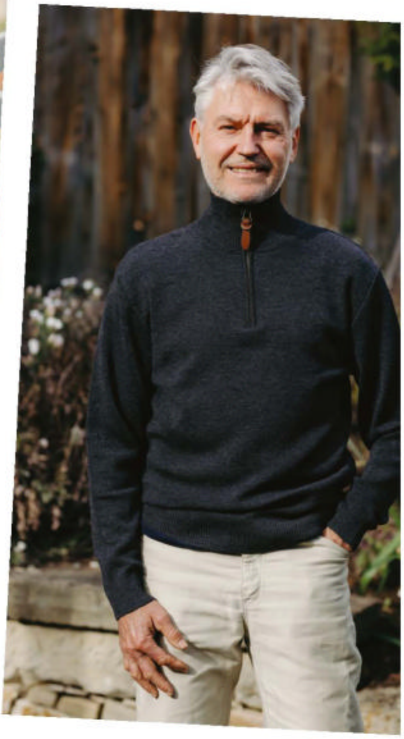

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Carl in Burnt Orange Zip-neck and Holly in Pistachio Marion skirt and scarf

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COUNTRY
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editor's letter

As this issue goes to press, photographer Ken Brass and I have just returned from a couple of flying trips to Queensland. They enabled us to see firsthand the extraordinary force of Mother Nature at her most vicious and most benign.

While some farms and stations are enjoying the best season in a decade, other people across Australia — in Victoria and South Australia — are reeling from either the worst droughts or the worst floods — south-western and northern Queensland, the NSW Northern Rivers and Mid-North Coast and cyclone-ravaged parts of Western Australia's Kimberley. There are many not-for-profits out there working to help people who are suffering in the regions and, if you possibly can, I urge you to support them. They include, but are not limited to, the Country Women's Association, the Foundation for Rural and Regional Resources, GIVIT, Farm Angels, Aussie Helpers, Rural Aid, Blaze Aid and Are You Bogged Mate?

The other thing you can do to help is get on the road and visit the communities that are doing it tough. They need tourists to support their businesses either on-farm or off and, so long as they are not in crisis or immediate aftermath, they'll welcome you with open arms.

Meanwhile, this issue has given us opportunities to meet some of these wonderful, resilient people. They include sisters Angie Nesbit and Shona Larkin, who started a business selling sun-protective gloves and Ross and Anna Tindall, who live on a station midway between Muttaburra and Hughenden in western Queensland. In Robe in South Australia, Paul and Mahalia Layzell live in the constant pursuit of coffee perfection, while Nick and Carina Chambers are beavering away with diversifications on their farm in the NSW Central West.

I hope you enjoy these stories and more and we look forward to seeing you for the next issue, which goes on sale mid-October.

Australian Country **cover photo by KEN BRASS**

Kirsty

Kirsty McKenzie, editor
kmckenzie@umco.com.au

helping out on this issue ...

PHOEBE HARTLEY

JOURNALIST

Raised in Melbourne with a background in filmmaking, Phoebe tells cinematic stories across print and audio from her adopted home on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country in Victoria's Macedon Ranges. She writes for a range of lifestyle magazines including The Australian Women's Weekly, *produces occasional audio stories for ABC and celebrates ageing in her newsletter* Woman of a Certain Age.

TIFFANY WARNER

PHOTOGRAPHER

Working within the Macedon Ranges, Tiffany has a passion for shooting old country homes and beautiful gardens. Her close working relationship with the Macedon Ranges Accommodation Association means she is often out and about capturing luxury homestay properties and the occasional property for sale.

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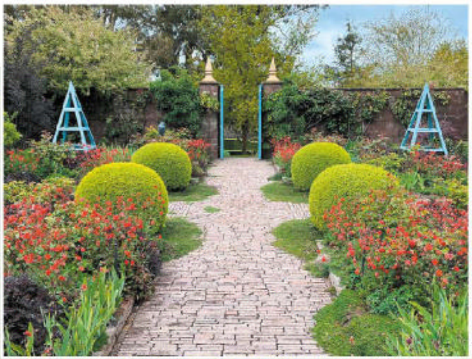

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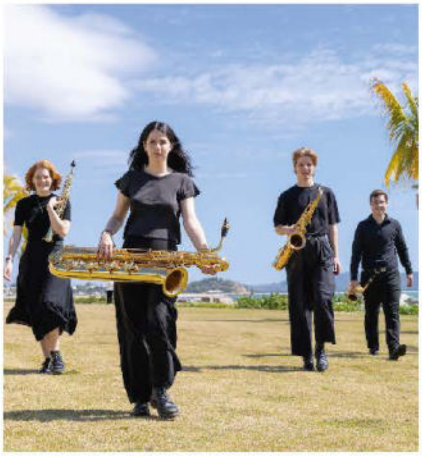
diary notes

COMPILED BY KIRSTY MCKENZIE

MAKE A DATE TO CELEBRATE THESE DIVERSE EVENTS AROUND THE COUNTRY.



AUGUST 1–SEPTEMBER 13 (NSW)

Boundaries: Transcended

As part of three concurrent exhibitions, the Bank Art Museum Moree (BAMM) will present Boundaries: Transcended, a collection of 700 tiny ceramic homes. The exhibition was created by hundreds of people who came together in celebration of the resettlement of refugees in the Hunter Valley, encouraging reflection on community building. bankartmuseummoree.org

JULY 25–AUGUST 2 (QLD)

Australian Festival of Chamber Music (AFCM)

A total of 36 extraordinary musicians, including 11 international artists, 13 artists making their AFCM debuts and three ensembles, will travel to Townsville-Gurambilbarra for what has become one of the world's most famous chamber music events. Clarinet virtuoso Michael Collins leads the incredible talent lineup and six world premieres will be performed. afcm.com.au

AUGUST 7–24 (NT)

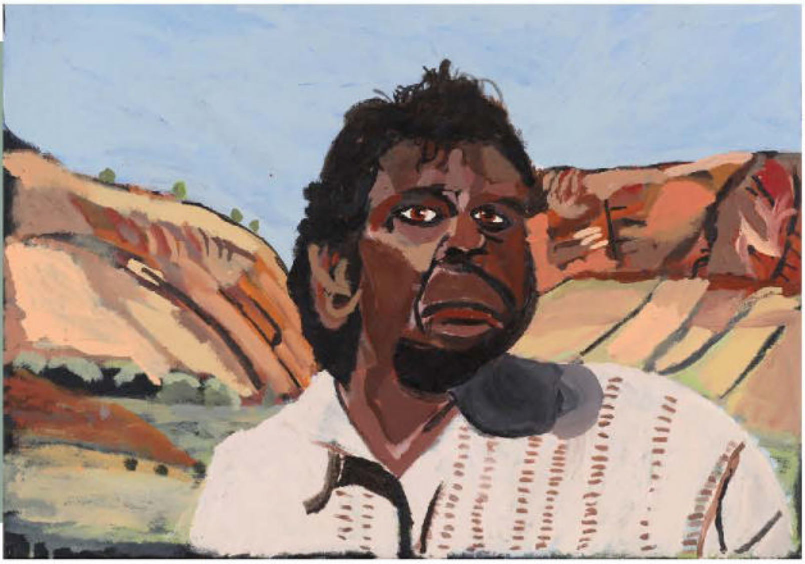
Darwin Festival

This year's Darwin Festival will feature its biggest Taste of Darwin program ever, alongside a full lineup of cabaret, theatre, comedy, dance, visual arts, outdoor concerts and fun family events. It will include the return of legendary NT chef Jimmy Shu's Hanuman restaurant after four years and the festival debut of the city's hottest new eatery, Flora's Temper Mexicantina. darwinfestival.org.au

NOW–NOVEMBER 5 (VIC)

65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art

This exhibition celebrates the brilliance and beauty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art while confronting the dark heart of Australia's colonial history. It includes rarely seen works of art and cultural objects from The University of Melbourne's collections alongside 193 important loans from 77 public and private lenders. potter-museum.unimelb.edu.au



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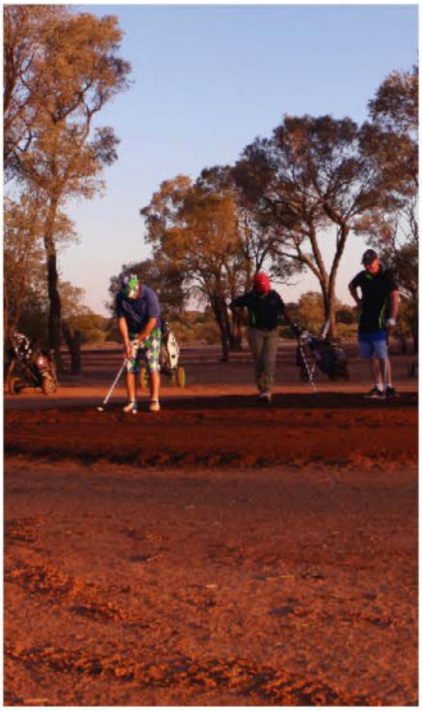
AUGUST 8–10 (QLD)

Mount Isa Mines Rodeo

For three adrenaline-fuelled days, Mount Isa in outback Queensland comes alive with the raw power of bull riding, bronc busting, barrel racing, roping and more, as the world's toughest cowboys and cowgirls battle for some of the most coveted buckles in rodeo. Famed country performer Luke Geiger will perform on Friday and Saturday evenings. mountisarodeo.com.au



AUGUST 16–17 (QLD)

Quilpie Open Golf Weekend

Get ready for a fun weekend in Quilpie. The event will include golfing on a stunning red-earth course in outback Queensland, a Passion Pop and music party hole on No 18, an 18-hole Las Vegas Scramble with a Vegas-style best-dressed competition, the opportunity to win the trip of a lifetime to Las Vegas for a team of four golfers or to score a new Toyota car in the hole-in-one competition. visitquilpieshire.com

JULY 28–AUGUST 3 (TAS)

Agricultured 2025

Celebrity chefs, farmers, agri-business operators, scientists, artists, food lovers, climate-change advocates and locals will gather to present a vibrant program of events across Launceston and northern Tasmania during agriCULTURED 2025, a lineup of events that weaves together themes of sustainability, gastronomy, and community. agricultured.com.au

SEPTEMBER 21–25 (NT)

Motocross World Championship

The world's best motocross riders will compete at the inaugural MXGP of Australia in Darwin, marking the first time the FIM Motocross World Championship has come to Australia in 24 years. The event will take place on a purpose-built, permanent track at the Hidden Valley Motorsports Complex and will be broadcast to more than 100 countries. mxgp.com

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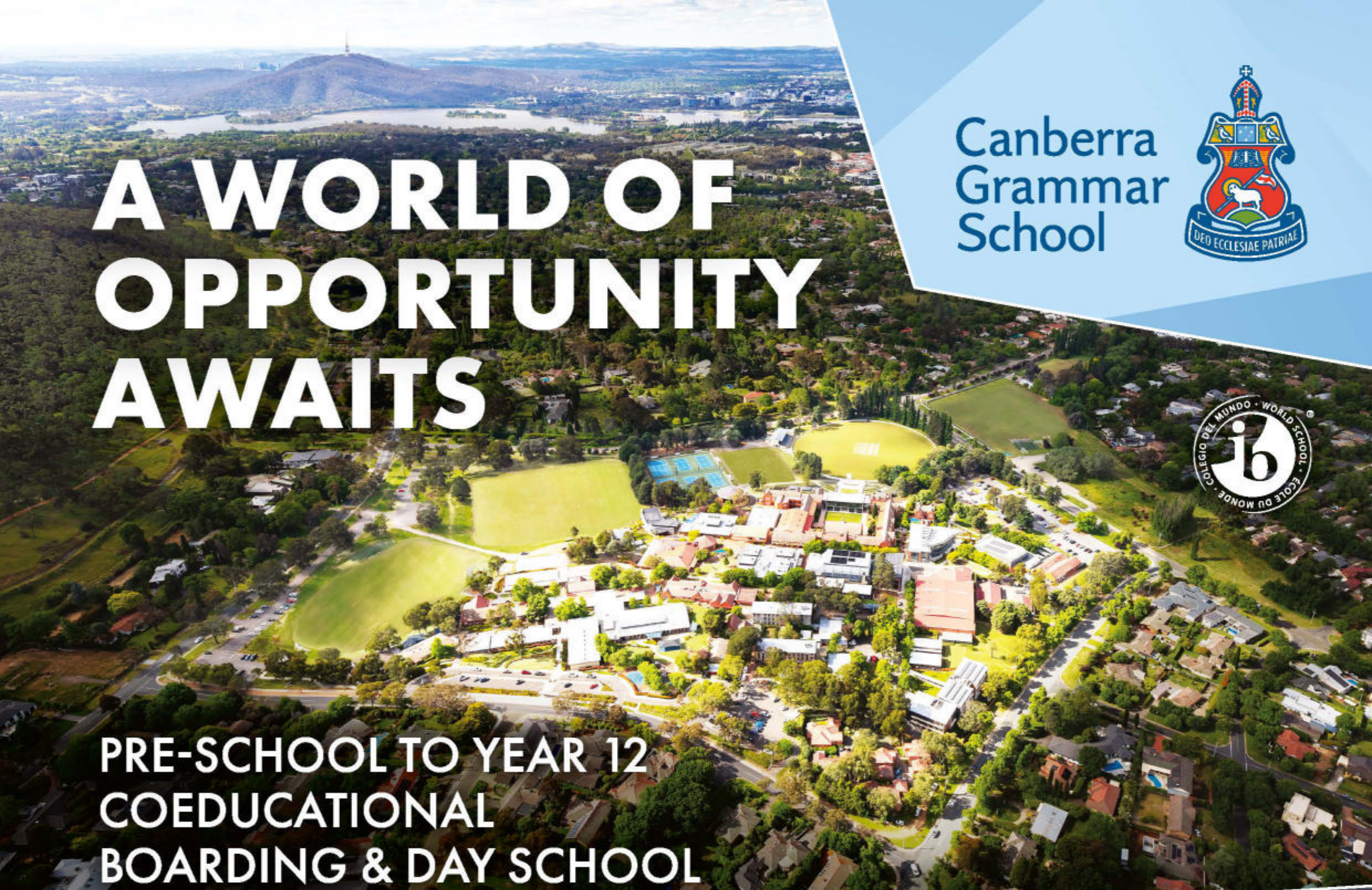

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hands-on, off-farm

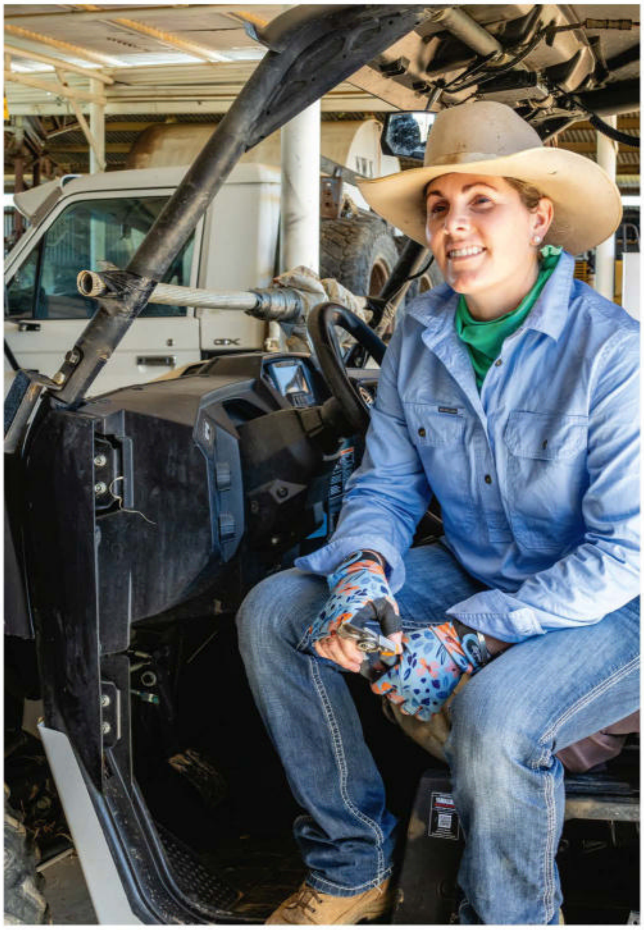
A THROWAWAY LINE CAUSED TWO OUTBACK QUEENSLAND SISTERS TO CREATE A BUSINESS SELLING SUN-PROTECTIVE GLOVES.

BY KIRSTY MCKENZIE, **PHOTOGRAPHY** KEN BRASS

THESE PAGES: Sisters Shona and Angie (l-r) show off their sunsafe gloves from their label FarmHer Hands.

> *“Like most bush kids, we were given a lot of responsibility from a young age.*

KENTLE DOWNS
10kms
LANDSBOROUGH DOWNS
18kms



To paraphrase the Nobel Prize-winning Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw, some people see things as they are and ask "why?", while others dream things that never were and ask "why not?". Sisters Angie Nesbit and Shona Larkin are a classic case of "why-nots". Catching up over coffee after a morning's work in the paddocks, Shona commented how great it would be if the gloves they wore for both skin and sun protection were more stylish. Angie's off-the-cuff response — "we should make our own" — was the genesis of FarmHer Hands, a bush-based business selling gloves that don't just protect against the sun, bumps and scratches, they also come in a range of fashion-forward colours and prints.

"Gloves are essential for most station work," Angie says. "I think we were using fishing gloves at the time. So, when Shona started the conversation, it seemed pretty obvious that it wouldn't be hard to improve on what we were currently using."

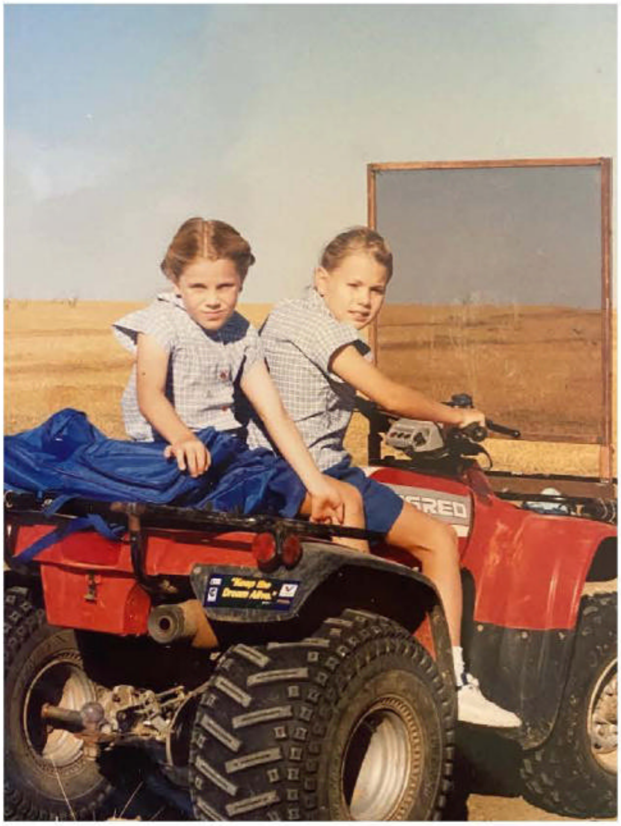
Angie, Shona and their sister Sasha spent their early days on a cattle station in the Prairie district of north-western Queensland and moved 80km south of Hughenden when their parents bought Kentle Downs in 1995. Their early schooling was via Charters Towers School of Distance Education but, following the move, they were able to attend the tiny one-teacher Cameron

THESE PAGES: Angie lives with her husband and children at Landsborough Downs, which is next door to her childhood home, Kentle Downs.

THESE PAGES: Timber features prominently throughout Angie's home, such as in the floorboards, door frames and furnishings.

> “*We're lucky that our parents always did things differently.*

THESE PAGES: (Clockwise from opposite top right) FarmHer Hands gloves are suitable for operating machinery and pruning plants; six-year-old Tilli in the distance-ed classroom; as kids, Shona and Angie would ride to school on the four-wheeler; cousins Ned, Hugo, Tilli and Elka climb the tankstand.



Downs primary school. "Shona and I used to ride the 20km each way on a four-wheeler," Angie says. "Like most bush kids, we were given a lot of responsibility from a young age. We went to boarding school in Toowoomba for high school."

Shona went on to study teaching and, after a nomadic period working on stations, Angie became a beauty therapist. Sasha is an events manager living in Brisbane. Their parents bought Landsborough Downs next door to Kentle in 2005, which is where Angie and her husband, Sam, who also runs an electrical business in Longreach, now live. Shona and her husband, Steven "Larko", took over running Kentle. "We're lucky that our parents always did things differently," Shona says. "They were cell grazing long before anyone had ever heard of regenerative ag. They also recognised the importance of succession planning, which has allowed us to continue to live on the land."

The Larkin children — Hunter, aged 13, Torah, 12, Will, 10, and Ned, 6 — and the Nesbits' kids — Hugo, 7, Tilli, 6, and Elka, 4 — now have the freedoms and responsibilities their mothers enjoyed as children. They include the privilege of learning at home via distance ed, though boarding school is an inevitability when they enter high school.

FarmHer Hands gloves are fingerless, to make them mobile-phone friendly, and helpful for tasks such as using a scalpel or other tools and holding the reins when horse riding. They are also reinforced on the underside to provide extra protection for jobs such as fencing, working with sharp tools and even dealing with spiky plants in the garden. They're made from lightweight, stretchy, durable and fast-drying fabric that's similar to the material used for swimming rashies. Most importantly, the fabric has a UPF (ultraviolet protection factor) of 50, which means that only one out of 50 (two per cent) of the sun's rays can penetrate. "In other words, that means it blocks 98 per cent of radiation," Shona explains. "The standards are regulated by the Australian government and the fabric has to be tested every year to ensure the claim remains accurate."

UPF is a particular concern for many people living in the bush, as working outdoors means constant exposure to the sun's harsh rays. In Shona's case, this fact is personally significant as, in 2016, she was diagnosed with stage II melanoma, the most dangerous of skin cancers.

"It was pretty frightening at the time," she recalls. "I was still breastfeeding Will and had to go to Townsville [five hours away by road] for surgery and treatment. Fortunately, it was successful, but our family has had a heightened awareness of the risks and need for protection ever since."

Australia has the dubious distinction of having the world's highest rate of melanoma and it's the third-most commonly diagnosed cancer in this country. It's estimated that almost 17,000 people will be diagnosed this year and 1300 of them will die as a result of the disease. The only good news in this rather bleak scenario is that screening is available and, if caught early, 90 per cent of melanomas can be cured by surgery.

Protection is a key factor in prevention, particularly for people who spend a lot of time in the sun. Wearing sunscreen, hats, protective clothing and gloves are important precautions against sun damage.

Angie and Shona say they were greatly helped in their start-up by Julie Brown, another outback Queensland resident and friend, who launched a sunsafe swimwear label, Coola Cozzies, from her on-station home near Ilfracombe a decade ago. "Julie was generous in sharing tips and advice," Angie says. "With a lot of Google searching, we were able to find a company in China to manufacture to our specifications."

ENGLISH
Are you ready to write?
1, 2, 3, 4
Are your feet flat on the floor?
5, 6, 7, 8
Is your back up tall and straight?
9, 10, 11, 12
This is how my pencil's held.
PARTS OF SPEECH
NOUNS
ADJECTIVES

UPF 50+

FarmHer Hands launched online just in time for Christmas 2023 and the sisters say they were overwhelmed by the response. “It was immediately obvious we’d found a gap in the market,” Angie says. “We’ve been blown away by the response and the lovely feedback. We set out to solve a personal need and hopefully create a bit of off-farm income to pay boarding school fees and maybe build a swimming pool, but we’ve moved beyond that.”

“It’s been DIY all the way,” Shona adds. “From building the website to social marketing, packing and distribution, we’ve been hands-on and learning as we go. There’s still more to learn and so much room for growth. Our current goal is to glove-up 16,000 pairs of hands by 2026 and to develop more corporate clients. It would be great if ag companies included our gloves as part of uniform. The most important thing, though, is to keep getting the word out about melanoma and the importance of always staying sunsafe, particularly in rural Australia.” **AC**

For more information visit farmherhands.com.

THIS PAGE: White and beige linens add softness to a bedroom.

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finding balance

SUSTAINABLE FARMING PRACTICES INFORM EVERY DECISION AT LONESOME DUCK, THE TREMBATH FAMILY'S FARM IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY.

BY KIRSTY MCKENZIE

THESE PAGES: Jeremy, his wife Amy and their little boy Turin live happily on the land at Lonesome Duck, their family farm in the Northern Territory.

Growing up on a farm in Zimbabwe in southern Africa and moving to Katherine in the Northern Territory as a teenager, Jeremy Trembath says his parents, Peter and Shirley, gave him the greatest gift of all — an open mind.

"Dad did his veterinary training in Australia and then moved to Zimbabwe in the early 1980s," Jeremy says. "He met and married Mum and they had a farm and later a game ranch in partnership with another couple. We may not have been rich, particularly after we came back to live in Australia in 2003 due to political upheaval in Zimbabwe, but we were always encouraged to be open to a wealth of new ideas and ways of doing things."

The Trembaths resettled in Katherine, where Peter established a vet practice and they bought a 130-hectare block they named Lonesome Duck, five kilometres north of the mining, tourism and pastoral industry service town in the Territory's Top End. In 2005, they bought more land to bring their farm to a total of 1000 hectares, a small holding in comparison to many of the vast cattle stations in the region, but one that Jeremy and his family hope will have a big impact on the land.

These days, Jeremy and his wife, Amy, who is also a vet, have taken over the running of Lonesome Duck and they have a herd of composite beef cattle, as well as a four-hectare garden for vegetables grown according to organic principles. They're raising their two-and-a-half-year-old son, Turin, on the farm and devoting their considerable energies to regenerating the land. Shirley and Peter also live on the farm and Peter is in the process of transitioning his practice to Rupert, Jeremy's youngest brother, who lives with his wife, Sally, on a nearby property.

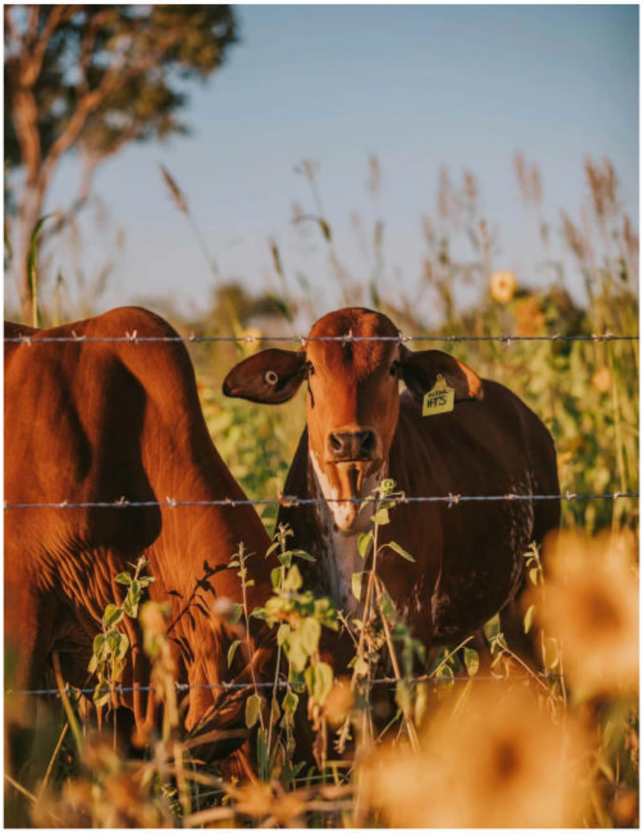
Jeremy completed a carpentry apprenticeship straight out of school and ran his own business for a decade, before deciding regenerative farming was his true passion. "We know that every farm in the world is in a degraded state," he says. "Our vision is to meld local food production with regenerative practices to increase to improve the soil and pasture quality, water management as well as the health of everything we grow."

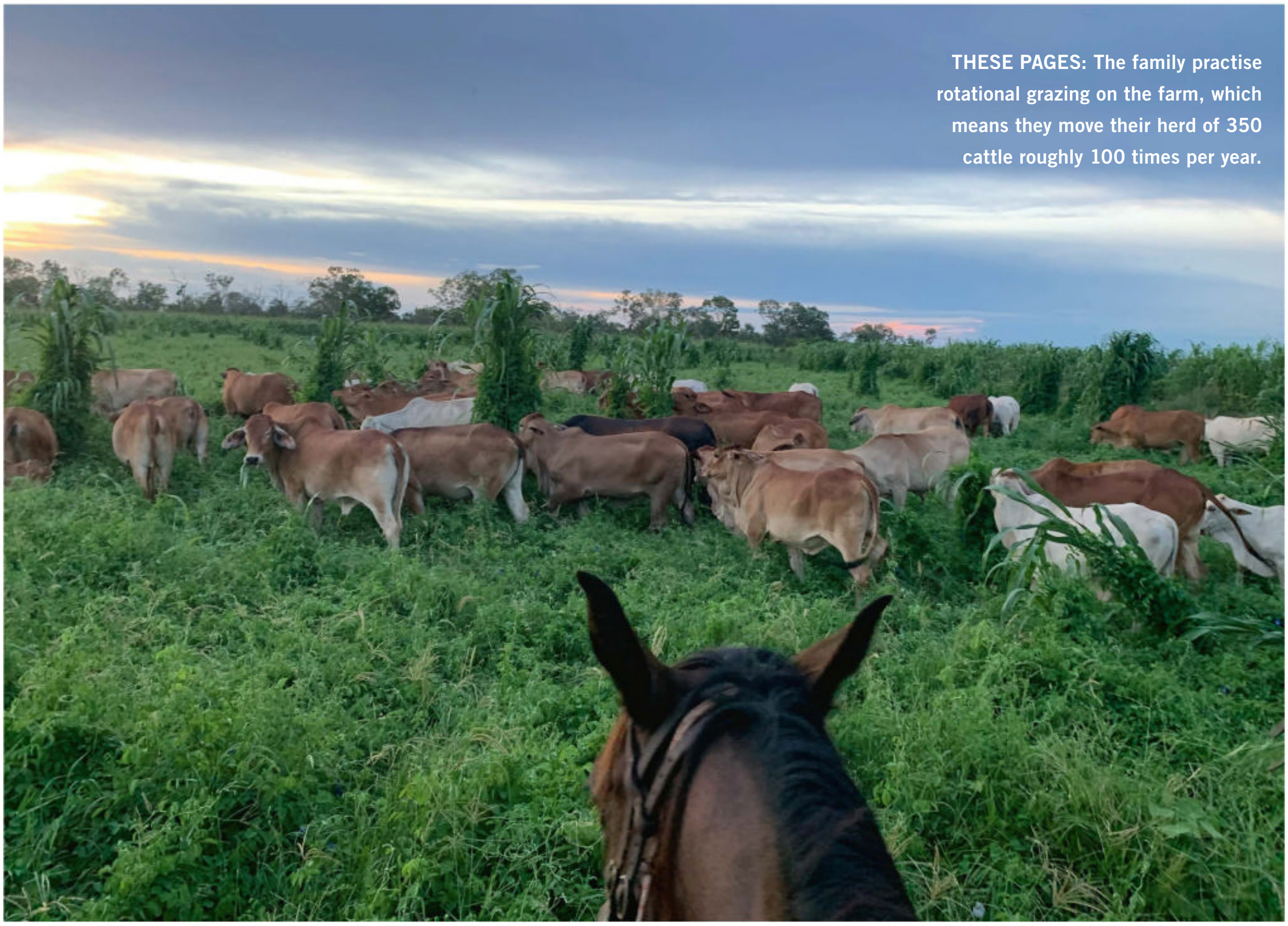
These practices include resting their vegie garden for a year by growing a cover crop. "It began as a vegie patch for domestic use," Jeremy explains. "It became so productive that we were giving away surplus and then decided to sell a bit at local markets and restaurants. But it was taking up the bulk of our time, so we've decided to step back from it a bit and concentrate on improving the land for our cattle."

The herd, which they have grown from an initial six heifers when they took over in 2016 to the present 350 head is a mix of Bos Indicus and Taurus, including an infusion of African breeds, which the Trembaths believe may result in a higher insect and parasite-resistance threshold. "We've recently bought 35 Nguni [a southern African breed] cow and calf pairs and introduced a Nguni/Shorthorn cross bull," Jeremy explains. "They came from a drought-stricken part of South Australia to two-metre-high grass off the back of a good wet season here, so we'll see how they go."

Jeremy and Amy have adopted a range of regenerative farming practices, all aimed at making their land healthier and more productive. They've embraced the philosophies of a number of leading landcare activists, including Zimbabwean Allan Savory, the father of holistic grazing, plus invented a few adaptations of their own.

Rotational grazing is part of their standard practice and, having recently completed 18km of fencing, the farm is now divided into 38 paddocks. "The use of electric fences means we can create an almost infinite number of





THESE PAGES: The family practise rotational grazing on the farm, which means they move their herd of 350 cattle roughly 100 times per year.

paddocks," he adds. "We move our herd about 100 times in a year, and sometimes during the wet season, we move them up to four times in a day." This is to both minimise damage and maximise the cattle's beneficial impact on the land and the (mostly native) grasses it supports.

The Trembaths have also introduced self-herding, which reduces the impact of machinery used for mustering and trains the cattle to move from one paddock to the next, mainly by placing feed attractants such as molasses and salt and mineral supplement lick blocks in the paddock they want the cattle to move to.

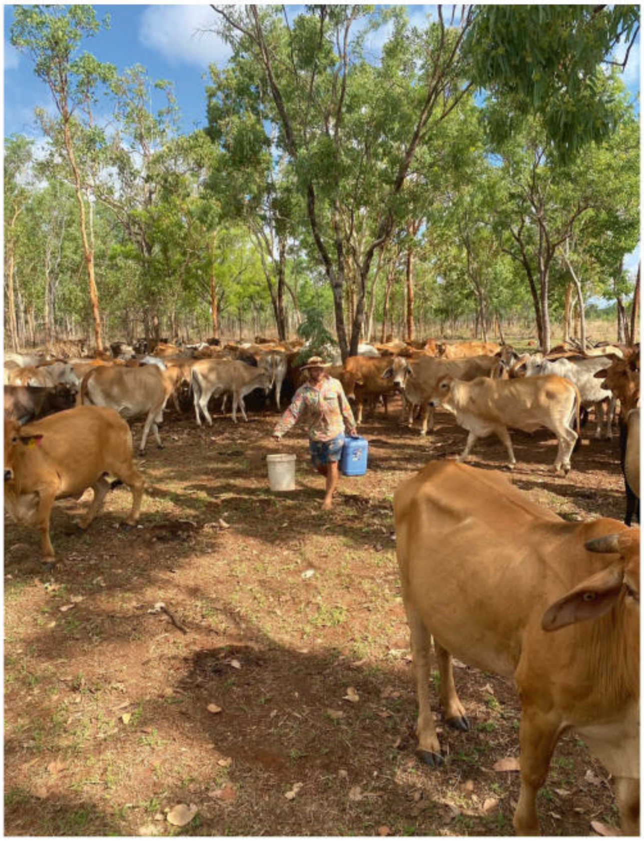
Given that Australia is the driest inhabited continent on earth, the Trembaths also do all that's in their power to conserve water. "After the ocean, the soil is the biggest storehouse for water, so we do what we can to keep it in the ground," Jeremy says. "We have bore water piped via solar pumps to troughs for the livestock, but it's important to increase water retention to improve the soil biology." To this end, as well as a couple of low-level dams, the Trembaths have introduced micro dams and "leaky weirs", which involve using rocks, logs and other debris to slow the flow of water in waterways and erosion channels as a means of retaining water.

In recognition of this multi-faceted approach to land and livestock management, Jeremy is a 2025 National Landcare Award finalist for the Australian Government Sustainable Agriculture Award. The winner will be announced in September. Jeremy says he appreciates the fact that his parents have always supported him and Amy in their approach and encouraged them to trial new techniques.

"They're open to innovation and never questioned me when, for instance, I said we weren't going to spray weeds anymore," Jeremy says. "As far as I know, farming is what I will do for the rest of my life and we're passionate about doing it as well as possible. The challenge is to make it attractive enough for the next generation to continue our work, and at an accelerated rate." **AC**

THIS PAGE: Young farm boy Turin is receiving an early education of the land, just like his dad did from his father.

> *"Our vision is to meld local food production with regenerative practices.*



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THESE PAGES: Father-and-son team Phillip and Dale are justly proud of their footwear brands.

made for mud

DPG SALES' BRANDS OTWAY FOOTWEAR AND CLOGEES MAKE BOOTS FOR EVERY OUTDOOR SITUATION.

BY KIRSTY MCKENZIE

When there's dirty work to be done, whether on-farm, in the garden, or around the campfire, the proudly Australian footwear company DPG Sales has the situation covered.

Founded in 2008 by Dale and Phillip Grant, DPG Sales boasts two brands – Otway Footwear, which makes work, gum and Chelsea-style boots and Clogees producing lightweight clogs and slides for the garden, beach or campground. The father-and-son duo bring many decades of footwear experience to the brands, which are manufactured in China to their very exacting standards. Comfort, reliability and durability are the common denominators of every shoe they produce.

Otway Footwear was inspired by the need to provide the most comfortable waterproof footwear possible to the farmers of the cold wet region of the Otway district in south-western Victoria. The rolling hills and muddy farms of the region provided the perfect testing ground for their products, which include work boots with nubuck uppers and gum boots made from a single piece of rubber for sole and upper ensuring they are 100 per cent waterproof. Soft and snug Neoprene linings on the gum boots are designed for flexibility and ease of wearing. All boots feature solid traction soles for the toughest and dirtiest of challenges.

Having satisfied their standards for the toughest possible work boots, Phil and Dale turned their attention to recreational footwear and created the Clogee, a lightweight, comfortable slip-on shoe made from EVA (ethelene vinyl acetate), as durable as it is flexible. "We wanted to extend our footwear offerings to gardeners and people who enjoy relaxing in the great outdoors," Dale says. "Clogees are now in demand year-round, whether they're kept at the back door for taking out the bins, doing some weeding or planting or hanging out around the barbecue or campfire."

Clogees are available in fun colours, patterns and floral prints, so the chores can be accomplished with an upbeat attitude. Similarly, as well as business-like basic black, brown and navy, Otway boots come in bold colours and fun patterns to inject an element of fun into the jobs that must be done. From farmers, gardeners and outdoorspeople to campers and even soccer parents, Otway Footwear and Clogees have you covered. So get out there and kick some mud!

Check out the entire ranges at otwayfootwear.com.au and clogees.com.au.

OTWAY
BOOTS
KICK SOME MUD
AUSTRALIA
OTWAY BOOTS KICK SOME MUD

OTWAY

Clogees
Clogees
Clogees

THESE PAGES: Paul and his wife Mahalia have lived in their home in South Australia's Robe for almost 30 years.

riding the coffee coaster

MAHALIA AND PAUL LAYZELL HAVE BEEN ON A CAFFEINE-INSPIRED JOURNEY FOR ALMOST THREE DECADES.

BY KIRSTY MCKENZIE, **PHOTOGRAPHY** ROSS WILLIAMS,
STYLING BRONTE CAMILLERI

22
LORE HAVEN

As a kid growing up in first Naracoorte and then Robe on South Australia's Limestone Coast, Paul Layzell says he couldn't wait to "get outta there". So he worked in hospitality and, in the 1980s, spent years travelling twice around the world from Europe and the UK to Nepal and the US.

By the early '90s, he was back home in Robe visiting his mum (who, at 96, still lives in the beach shack the family built in 1967) when his friend, chef Steve Cumper, introduced him to his sister, Mahalia. "Mahalia had worked in restaurants in Melbourne so we had a lot in common and we became friends," Paul says. "She's a trained sweets chef, I'm more of a short-order cook, but we enjoyed working together and romance developed."

Paul moved to Melbourne in the mid-'90s, but as a couple they continued to visit Paul's family in Robe. "It's an idyllic little bubble that's been a holiday destination for 150 years," he says. "Beautiful white sandy beaches and turquoise water that looks like the Greek Islands until you go for a swim and realise the water comes straight off the Antarctic."

It was during one of those visits when the Layzells identified a gap in Robe's hospitality offerings. "There was nowhere serving decent coffee or breakfast," Paul says. "So, in 1996, we moved to Robe and opened the Wild Mulberry Cafe, introducing both decent espresso and smashed avocado to town." The couple bought what they describe as "a pretty ordinary suburban brick home" the

THESE PAGES: (Clockwise from below left) The entrance to their home; Mahalia and Paul; Mahlia is no stranger to the daily grind; the Layzells roast coffee in one section of the cafe and sell gifts, coffee and treats in another.

THESE PAGES: (Clockwise from left) An outdoor seating area; palm tree wallpaper and curtains and bursts of bright colour bring some sunny cheer indoors.

following year. “That’s all we could afford and it served us well as a place to raise our family,” Paul explains. Edward was born in 2002 and Byron arrived in 2007.

By 1999, Mahalia had taken her pastry-trained “chemistry brain” pursuit of the best cup of coffee to the next level and began roasting beans in a shed in their backyard. “We outgrew that pretty quickly,” Paul says. “We moved to a building in Robe’s industrial area and gradually the business evolved into a much larger operation. By 2002, we sold the cafe to concentrate on Mahalia Coffee and allow a bit more family time, but the coffee business really took off.”

In 2007, in the middle of the GFC (global financial crisis), a much bigger building came on the market and the Layzells jumped at the chance. “It was just an empty factory full of crayfish vats,” Paul says. “But the price was right and a lot of renovations later, we have turned it into a Victorian-era coffee emporium.”

Paul and Mahalia now roast coffee in one section, have developed a gift store/cafe in another, serving gourmet toasties, cakes, scones and soups and packets of their coffee. “We were given an unexpected gift when the council built a children’s playground on our back boundary,” Paul says. “So we were able to put in a gate and glass windows so families can keep an eye on their children while they play and the grown-ups have coffee on the deck”

Mahalia Coffee has grown beyond their wildest imaginings and even the challenges of the pandemic delivered a silver lining when they pivoted to online sales. Customers grabbed at the chance to receive a taste of the holidays they couldn’t take by ordering mail-order roasted coffee free of freight charges.

“Mahalia is really picky about how she roasts and people have grown to appreciate that,” Paul says. “It’s basically cooking a seed to caramelise the sugars. Cook it too fast and it tastes sour, cook it too slow and it’s stewy.” The range now includes five blends ranging from high-caffeine through to mild, fruity and sweet, a blend with hints of berries and toasted almonds, café crema with chocolate-caramel accents to European dark roast. As well, they offer single-origin packs from all the world’s leading producers — Ethiopia, Kenya, East Timor and Sumatra. It never ceases to amaze them how far their reputation has spread and they now serve customers from all over the world and employ about 14 staff during the summer high season.

In an unexpected twist of events, Edward and his partner, George Kheav, have ended up helping out in the business. “They have a unit in Adelaide and divide their time between Robe and the city,” Paul explains. “Edward studied film and television so he’s very good at socials, while George is everywhere, helping on the floor, with the roasting, wherever he’s needed. It’s great to have them involved as they bring fresh perspective to what we do.” Byron is still at high school in Mount Gambier and lives in a house the family owns at Millicent, about midway between the two towns. “We divide our time between Robe and Millicent and somehow we make it all work,” Paul says.

Two years ago, the Layzells embarked on a major restoration of the Robe house and today the interiors bear no resemblance to its humble brick ’80s exterior.

THIS PAGE: The family has transformed the interiors of their 1980s home, a project that sparked a passion for design in Paul.

Paul says he enjoys the renovation process and has even accepted commissions to help others with their interiors. "Customers see what we've done at Mahalia Coffee and ask me for help," he says. "I needed a creative outlet and there wasn't enough room for a painting studio, so I turned to interior design."

In his "spare" time, Paul is studying a course at the Interior Design Institute. "I've been working on it for a few years and I've only got one module to go," he says. Meanwhile, he's exercising his creative urges by remodelling the Millicent house. "It will have a nod to the '70s and '80s with a bit of a [American TV Western] *Bonanza* feel," he says. "I don't want to get in a rut, so its brief is completely different to the Robe house, which was more classical and whimsical."

As he reflects on almost 30 years in Robe, Paul says "coffee is the goose that's enabled us to live a pretty good life in the country". "It's a great place to bring up children," he adds. "We could have sent the boys to boarding school, but that didn't feel right. It's like asking someone else to bring up your kids and we didn't want that. It's interesting that Mahalia and I were once so city-oriented and now we're happy to be country bumpkins. The more you travel, the more you realise you live in paradise. We now know that the place I couldn't wait to get away from offers a very good lifestyle, with a great food and wine scene and cosmopolitan influences. We know we're lucky to have ended up here." **AC**

For more information on Mahalia Coffee, visit mahaliacoffee.com.au.

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THESE PAGES: A stunning lunch setting using Carina's Long Lunch Linen; life on the farm is good for Carina, Nick and their girls, Airlie and Georgia (photo by Pip Williams).

paddock to party

NICK AND CARINA CHAMBERS NEED LOOK NO FURTHER THAN THEIR FARM FOR THE INGREDIENTS FOR HOSTING A LONG TABLE LUNCH.

BY KIRSTY MCKENZIE, **PHOTOGRAPHY** KEN BRASS

THESE PAGES: (Clockwise from opposite below right) The Chambers breed Black Angus cattle; sisters climbing trees; an elegant affair among the olive groves; Nick and the family dog, Butter; country road.

Like many life-changing decisions, the genesis was swift, but executing it took much longer. Nick Chambers and his wife, Carina, were returning from a wedding with Carina's aunt and uncle, Debbie and James Johnson, when it was decided that they should buy Glen Antrim, their farm near Newbridge in the NSW Central West.

"We were in the back of a taxi talking about how Debbie and James wanted to retire," Carina recalls. "For Nick, buying Glen Antrim meant realising his dream of having his own farm, so the decision was obvious. Fortunately, they agreed to a long settlement because we'd just moved to Tamworth for Nick's work as head of grower services for GrainCorp, so it was four years until we could actually take over."

Carina, who is an artist and the founder and co-owner of Long Lunch Linen — a business that imports exquisite French table linen — grew up on a farm at Spring Ridge on the Liverpool Plains. Nick came from Hobart, where his dad was a lawyer, though his mother came from a farm in Tasmania's north, so he had lots of fond memories of time spent with cousins on the farm. Nick and Carina met while they were at university in Sydney — she was studying communications, design and international studies and he was studying animal science. They pursued their careers in the city until shortly after the birth of daughter Airlie, who is now seven, when they moved to Tamworth. Georgia, who is now five, was born in Tamworth.

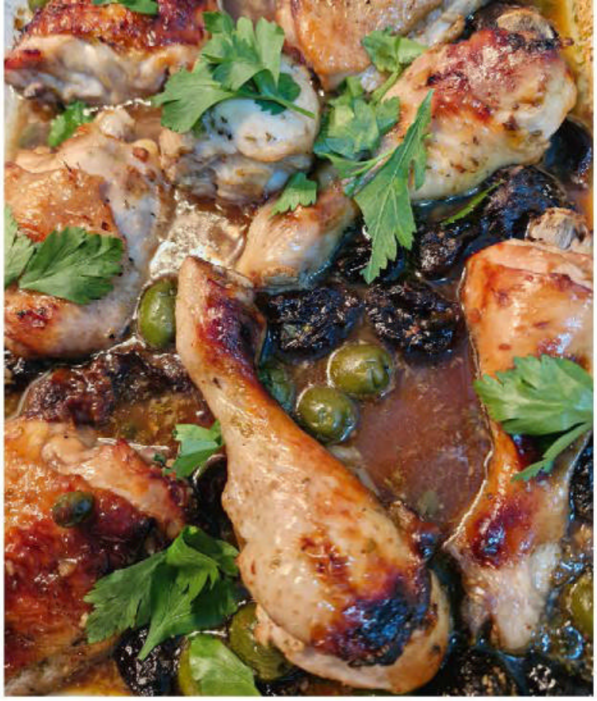
In 2022, they finally made the move to Glen Antrim, a 1000-acre (404-hectare) farm, where they breed Black Angus cattle, based on 200 breeding cows, with bloodlines from both Carina's parents' and her aunt and uncle's herds. They sow oats to graze their cattle on and cut it to make hay at the end of summer. "We feed it to our breeders in the winter after calving when they need extra energy to keep warm and nurse their young," Carina explains.

As well, the Chambers have 600 Correggiola olive trees and two truffle orchards planted to 800 French and English oaks and hazelnuts. "The truffles and olives were planted by Debbie and James about 25 years ago," Carina explains. "They were among the first to plant truffles on the mainland as the initial Australian forests were in Tasmania. It was only in the '70s that the French had figured out a way of taking the wild spores to inoculate the trees to grow them."

Learning from James and professional truffle hunters,

GLEN ANTRIM
GA
AGRICULTURE
2019 EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
NEWBRIDGE, NSW
500ml

THESE PAGES: (Clockwise from below) Truffle up close; the family home; the Chambers love hosting long table lunches serving platters of their own produce; Chicken Marbella; the farm is home to 600 Correggiola olive trees.



> *“We find that flexibility and diversity are key elements that help us stay afloat.*

the Chambers have trained their English Springer Spaniel, Butter, to find the truffles in the ground. “You take the dog through the grove and it signifies when it can smell the truffle,” Carina explains. “Butter is still learning but she wags her tail madly. In France, they use pigs. We initially mark the trees, then go back and dig the truffles out as gently as possible to avoid scratching the exterior.”

Diversification both on and off farm is critical for the Chambers’ operations. “Between droughts, the pandemic, rising interest rates, economic downturns and time away from work to raise our girls, we find that flexibility and diversity are key elements that help us stay afloat,” Carina says. “Nick still works full-time for GrainCorp and I work four days a week between my painting and Long Lunch Linen. Georgia is still at home on Mondays. We spend most weekends on the farm and in the evenings during summer when the light is good. Or before work in the winter when we need to feed cattle… I must admit, not my favourite occupation. Fortunately, we have Aldi ski gear for the frosty mornings. Thankfully, we also have the help of a very experienced friend one day a week. We’d be lost without him.”

While Nick and Carina rarely take breaks for relaxing, they do relish time spent with family and friends. In the rare breaks between the many demands on their time, they love nothing better than a long table lunch in the olive grove, serving shared platters of their own produce.

“Long term, we hope to one day have enough time to really enjoy it all,” Carina says. “Our farm isn’t big enough to sustain a family so it will always need to be supplemented by another income stream. Nick and I often dream about the future where he can read a newspaper, enjoy a cuppa (while it’s still hot) and farm, while I can potter about the garden and paint. In reality, it mightn’t be until retirement for that to happen.” **AC**

CHICKEN MARBELLA

This is an oldie but a goodie, straight from the kitchen of the Silver Palate, the legendary New York providore founded by Julee Rosso and Sheila Lukins in the 1970s. The partnership and the shop are no more, but their food lives on at tables around the world, including the Chambers family.

SERVES 10 TO 12

½ cup olive oil
½ cup red-wine vinegar
1 cup pitted prunes
½ cup pitted green olives
½ cup capers, with a bit of juice
6 bay leaves
1 head of garlic, peeled and finely chopped
½ cup fresh oregano, chopped, or ¼ cup dried oregano
Salt
¼ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
4 chickens, cut into pieces
1 cup dry white wine
1 cup brown sugar
¼ cup finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

In a large bowl, combine the olive oil, vinegar, prunes, olives, capers and juice, bay leaves, garlic, oregano, salt and pepper. Add the chicken pieces and turn to coat. Refrigerate overnight. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Arrange the chicken in a single layer in a large shallow roasting pan (or two if necessary). Spoon the marinade over it evenly. Pour in the wine and sprinkle the chicken with the brown sugar.

Bake until the thigh pieces yield clear yellow juice when pricked with a fork, 50 to 60 minutes, basting two or three times with the pan juices once the chicken begins to brown. (When basting, do not brush off the sugar. If the chicken browns too quickly, cover lightly with foil.)

Transfer the chicken pieces to a warm serving platter and top with the prunes, olives and capers. Keep warm. Place the roasting pan over medium heat and bring the pan juices to a boil. Reduce to about ½ cup. Strain into a heatproof bowl, add the parsley and pour over the chicken.

NOTE: This dish can served while hot or at room temperature.

THESE PAGES: Anna and Ross Tindall have lived and worked at Rockwood for the past five years.

set in stone

ANNA AND ROSS TINDALL ARE BRINGING NEW LIFE TO THE HISTORIC HOMESTEAD AT ROCKWOOD STATION IN NORTH-WESTERN QUEENSLAND.

BY KIRSTY MCKENZIE, **PHOTOGRAPHY** KEN BRASS

If the walls could talk at the homestead on Rockwood station in north-western Queensland, they'd tell a tale of resourcefulness for making a living in often arid conditions in a remote location. They'd tell of births, deaths and marriages, floods, fires, droughts and fluctuating commodity prices the station has experienced since it was first established by a settler named O'Rourke in 1873.

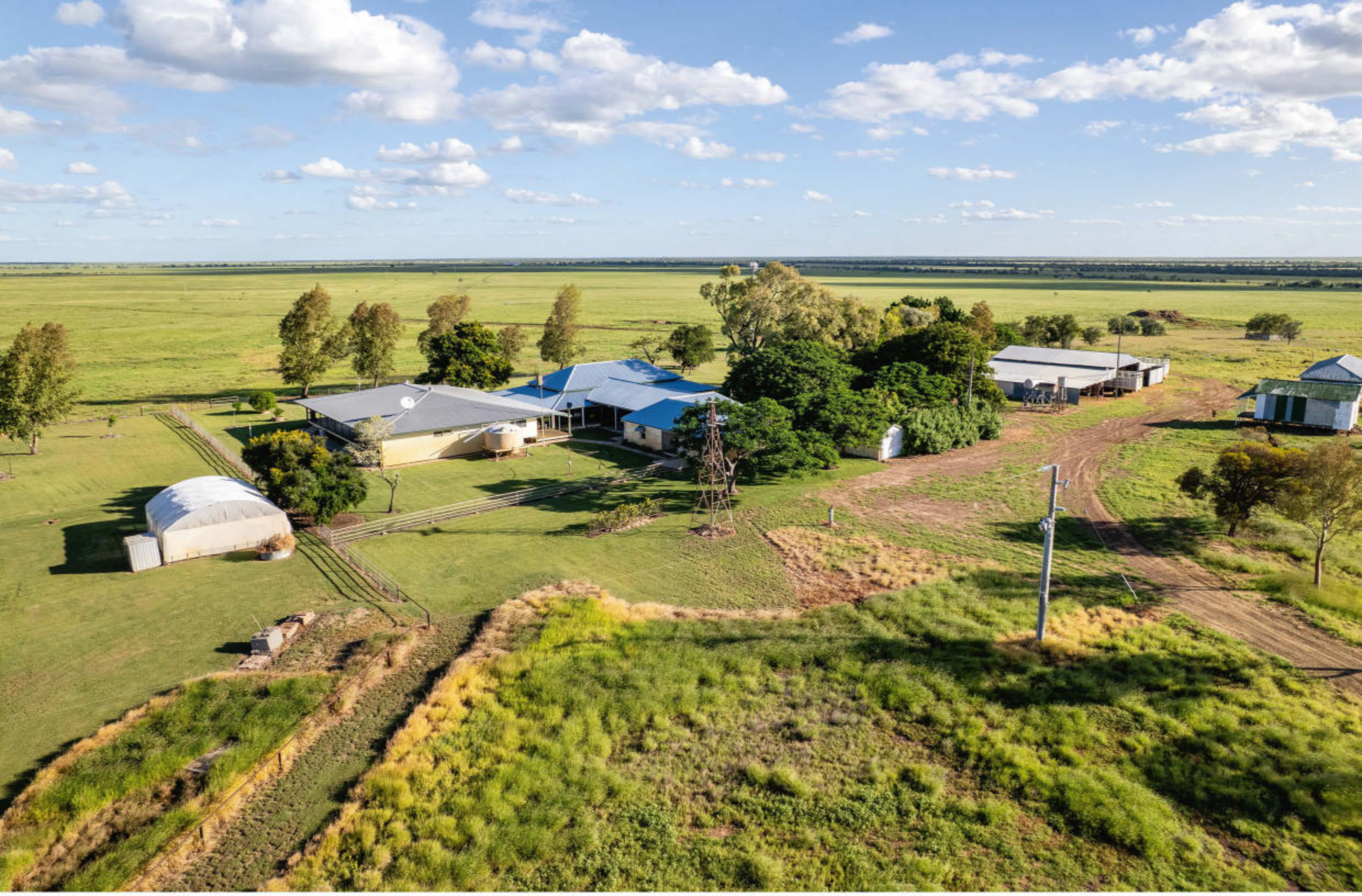
Located 100 kilometres south of the outback town of Hughenden, and almost an equal distance from the small community of Muttaburra to the south, Rockwood today is a 77,000-acre (31,160-hectare) station backgrounding a mixed herd of about 4000 head of Brahman and Wagyu cattle before they are sent to feedlots or abattoirs. Managers Ross and Anna Tindall have lived there with their son, Clancy, since 2020, shortly after it was bought by Jack Mann of the north Queensland pastoral company Mann Beef.

"We were hired on a handshake by the side of the road," Ross recalls. "It was a Thursday and we agreed to start the following Saturday. We didn't even discuss money until about six weeks after we moved here. That probably tells you all you need to know about both parties. We knew we'd be a good fit."

Coincidentally, Ross had worked briefly on Rockwood for its previous owners, the Delahunty family, 20 years earlier when he was fresh out of school. He'd grown up on another of western Queensland's historic properties, Darr River Downs, about 200km to the south-west between Muttaburra and Longreach. His parents, Cam and Sharon Tindall, bought the station, which also has a stone homestead built in the 1870s or early 1880s, about the same time as the one at Rockwood. Darr River Downs is now run by Ross's brother, Paul, and sister-in-law, Fi, and they've recently started station tours — with dad Cam on hand to tell colourful stories about the past.

Ross has built a solid career as a mustering contractor on cattle stations, working in every state except the ACT and Tasmania. An ebullient, enthusiastic character, he has a deep love of the land and its people and livestock. For more than a decade, he moonlighted as a rodeo clown, arguably one of the most important roles in the sport of rough-riding. He's also known for a passion for history and chasing the odd camel. In the five years Ross and Anna have lived at Rockwood, they've become known for their generous hospitality, frequently hosting friends and neighbours for barbecues and parties. In 2022, they celebrated their wedding on the station, with 120 guests and a party to end all parties that went for a week.

Anna also grew up in the bush, on a sheep, cattle and cropping property near Quambone on the NSW north-western plains. After boarding school in Armidale and a gap year including six months in Canada, she studied teaching and worked at various schools in rural NSW. She met Ross when he worked for her brother, Tom McLeish, and his wife, Belinda, and they were living in Longreach. "They were moving to their new station north of Winton, so I went up to help them with the packing up and to look after the kids during the move,"



THESE PAGES: (Clockwise from above) The homestead at Rockwood sits on 31,160 hectares; family photos take pride of place in the kitchen; station managers Anna and Ross and their son, Clancy.

THESE PAGES: Bit by bit, room by room, the Tindalls have made the homestead their own.

THESE PAGES: Anna's lent her keen eye for design to the homestead, gradually restoring the interiors and incorporating the odd bits and pieces Ross picks up from the paddock or dump into the home's decor.

Anna says. "There was an instant spark and we've been together pretty much ever since."

Anna moved to a teaching job in Longreach, then took a year off to work as a tour co-ordinator for Alan and Sue Smith's Outback Aussie Tours, which has its HQ in Longreach. "That job gave me so many skills — not just in customer service, but logistics and communication platforms," she says. "I went back to teaching for another year and had the most wonderful year six class, even though it was during COVID. After that, we got the job here, so I felt I went out of teaching on a high."

Always keen to extend herself, Anna jumped at the chance when her sister needed a logo to promote her new Airbnb in Wellington, NSW. "I'd never have called myself artistic, but I was looking for a creative outlet as Clancy was a baby and I was not as free to go out in the paddock as I used to," she recalls. "I really enjoyed the process and I found a couple of programs that help turn drawings into graphics and just went from there."

These days, Anna Tindall Graphic Design is a fully fledged side hustle, and Anna has developed a niche designing logos for the ag industry. "Everyone needs a brand," she says. "Stations need logos, contractors, studs, clubs, shops and other businesses need them too… everyone in business needs a brand and I love talking to the clients and finding the essence of their work. I think that's what resonates with people is I don't sentimentalise the bush — there are no love hearts on kelpie collars — and the fact that I'm from the bush means I can talk their language."

> *“We were hired on a handshake by the side of the road. We knew we’d be a good fit.*

THIS PAGE: Cattle station Rockwood is owned by Queensland pastoral company Mann Beef and the homestead dates back to 1882.

The burgeoning business has also served as welcome distraction in recent times as, tragically, the Tindalls lost their newborn daughter, Dolly, at the end of last year. Following what was ostensibly a smooth pregnancy, Anna experienced difficulties during labour and had to have an emergency C-section. She was airlifted from Longreach Hospital to Brisbane with LifeFlight, while Ross and Dolly were transferred to Brisbane with the Royal Flying Doctor Service. “We still don’t fully understand what went wrong, but she only lived for six days,” Anna explains. “She was a beautiful angelic baby and I’m not going to pretend it hasn’t been really tough for all of us. I find it helpful to talk about what happened and about her to others as it keeps her alive somehow. I’ve also found great support from social media groups. Sometimes it’s a force for evil, but I’ve found online support from other families experiencing similar grief to be a blessing. Between this and the unconditional love from my beautiful Mumma [Sue McLeish], who has been there for me every step of the way, I am forever grateful.”

Anna adds that in the months following the devastating event, hundreds of butterflies would follow her around the house and garden. “We also experienced the most amazing sunsets,” she says. “They are always good out here, but these were insane. It felt as though Dolly was yelling at us from the treetops. I now see her in all the beautiful things we have here in the natural environment.”

Anna has also channelled her prodigious energy into decorating the homestead and gradually restoring each room. “I’ve always loved rearranging furniture and interiors and here I’ve plenty of space to work with,” she says. “Ross is a mad scavenger and is always coming up with odd bits and pieces from the paddock or the dump and we work those artefacts into the decoration.”

“According to the datestone above a doorway, the Rockwood homestead, which is actually two stone buildings joined by a now-covered courtyard, was completed in 1882. It’s constructed of locally quarried stone, remarkably held together with ant-bed mortar, a material usually reserved for compacted floors and tennis courts. Like many station accommodations, it’s been added to through the years and there’s also a more recent timber addition housing the kitchen and living area, as well as numerous outbuildings. These include a meat house and a curious corrugated-iron and stone structure that looks like a roof on short walls, covering a large hole in the ground, potentially built as an underground tank or cellar.

Rockwood is enjoying a good season and the surrounding paddocks are bathed in green. “It was a dust bowl in the grip of a really bad drought when we arrived,” Anna says. “The only green thing was the lawn around the homestead. I spent hours dragging sprinklers around to keep it going. I was very aware that it had been there for 100 years and I didn’t want to be the one who killed it.”

The Tindalls say they are deeply grateful for being entrusted as managers of the land, livestock and station’s legacy. “The bush offers a great lifestyle,” Ross says. “Sadly for the average Joe Blow, the only way of living on the land is to work your way up the station employee ladder as it’s very hard to get a foot in the ownership door. We consider ourselves very lucky to be here and can’t ever imagine leaving.” **AC**

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the quiet life

ANDREW TOWNER TRADED A GLOBE-TROTTING CAREER FOR THE PEACEFUL MOUNTAINSIDE IN NORTH-WEST REGIONAL VICTORIA — AND FOUND HIS FOREVER HOME.

BY PHOEBE HARTLEY, **PHOTOGRAPHY** TIFFANY WARNER

THESE PAGES: Andrew feeds his pet alpacas, Sydney and Anzac, at his historic home at Braeside Mt Macedon.

Sometimes we don't need to seek out our purpose — if we're lucky, opportunities present themselves. And so it was for Andrew Towner with his 27-acre (11-hectare) property Braeside Mt Macedon, on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country in the north-western Victorian town of Mount Macedon. "I didn't search for this place," Andrew says. "It found me."

A self-described "hospitality tragic", Andrew has dedicated his life to looking after others and carries incredible memories of a globe-trotting career spanning decades in hotels and high-end restaurants. Raised in Lake Macquarie near Newcastle, NSW, Andrew completed hotel school in the late 1980s, followed by a corporate traineeship in Sydney. He completed further study in the US and Switzerland, before heading to the UK in the early '90s. There he worked at the stately Stapleford Park Country House Hotel in Leicestershire, and The Criterion Restaurant on Piccadilly Circus in London. "An amazing experience," Andrew says.

His career then took him around the Asia-Pacific and, by 2011, after a long stint based in Singapore, Andrew decided he was ready to settle into a quieter life. "Time just flies, at that stage, I was in my mid-40s," he says. "I was travelling all the time… I lived out of a suitcase." Returning to Australia, he found he didn't have a place to call home. A chance visit to the Macedon Ranges in 2012 changed everything. "I immediately felt there was something special about this part of the world," Andrew says.

Special, and perhaps strangely familiar. Around this time, Andrew uncovered a drawing he'd done when he was about 16 years old, of a country cottage with big windows

THESE PAGES: (Clockwise from this image) The lounge room features leather Chesterfield armchairs and vintage decor, as well as several family heirlooms; Andrew hires a couple of locals to help with the gardens; farm-fresh eggs; an elegant dining setting.

THESE PAGES: The four seasons put on a spectacular rotating display in the garden, with a magnificent show of colour in autumn.

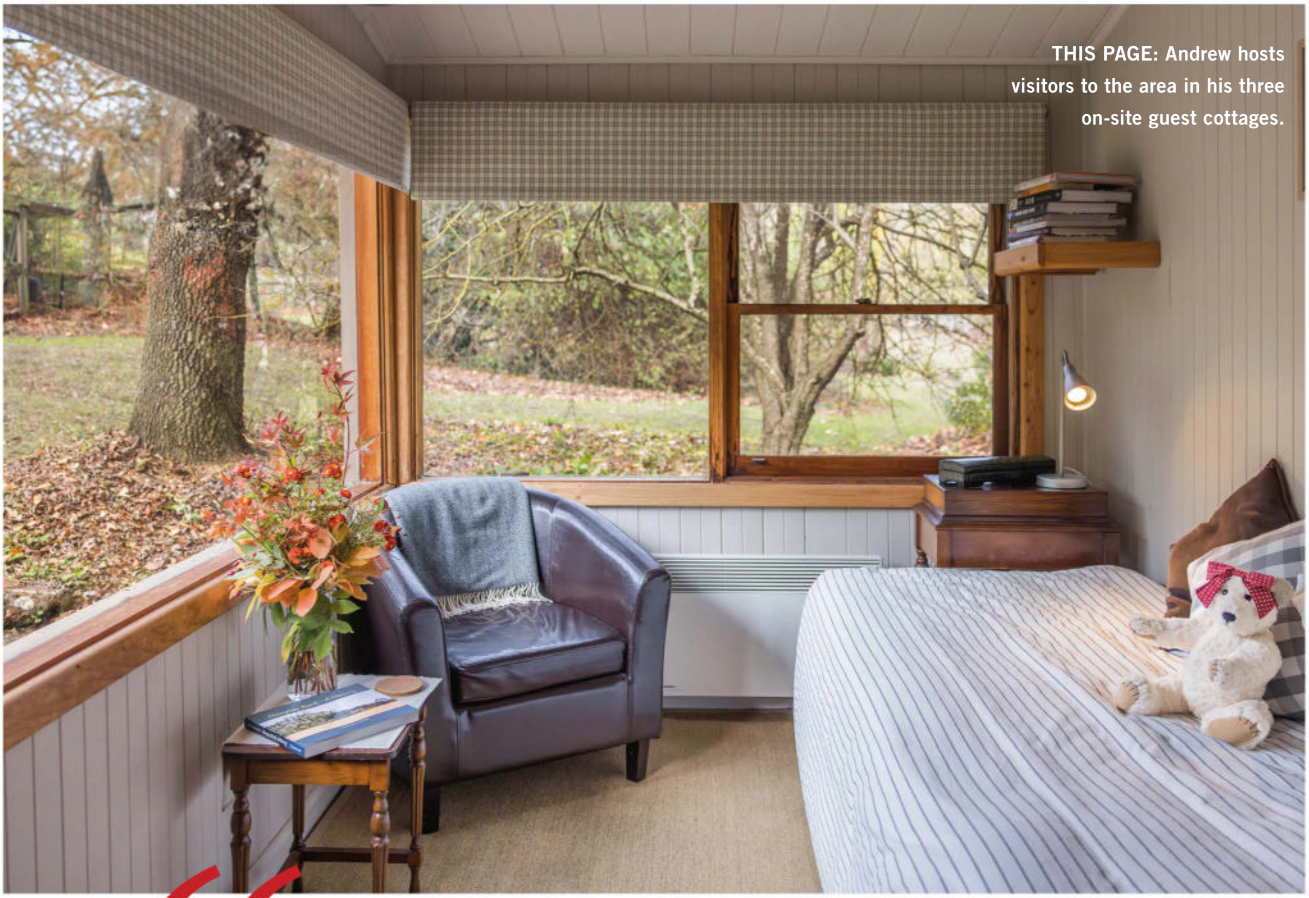
THESE PAGES: (Clockwise from top) Leaves of the season; kitchen with a view; a well-lit bedroom; fresh bread and all the spreads.

and a wide verandah. “It’s this cottage — spooky!” Andrew says with a smile, referring to the historic farmhouse at Braeside Mt Macedon, which he bought and settled into in 2014. “I always wanted to be in the country, and I always had a vision of something like this,” he says.

Braeside Mt Macedon was once part of a larger estate called Penryn, the remainder of which still exists next door. Andrew’s residence was built in the very early 1900s and has been transformed over the decades into the modern Australian farmhouse it is today, while retaining much of its historic charm. Andrew’s favourite sitting spot is the sun-drenched, timber-lined dining room, which he updated and painted a stylish grey. There’s a view through the picture windows onto the rambling gardens, with a dense backdrop of the bushland beyond. The dining room was once part of the wide, wraparound verandah that encircled the original building, before the previous owners of 40 years enclosed the back part of the house, and made other updates to the property, which Andrew has refreshed and put his own stamp on.

With a crackling fire in the original fireplace, the lounge room is warm and welcoming, but one would never imagine that a cafe was once run in this space by the long-term former owners. Looking back further, Andrew says there was a time when an unorthodox farmer kept hay in the house for the horse that roamed the back paddock. “During that time, it was allowed to deteriorate,” he laments.

MONINI
Grapeseed Oil



THIS PAGE: Andrew hosts visitors to the area in his three on-site guest cottages.

> *“I always wanted to be in the country, and I always had a vision of something like this.*

Now there are no horses on-site — just two cheeky alpacas, who keep the grass down, a frisky flock of chickens that provide an abundance of fresh eggs and a thriving orchard producing stone fruit and berries galore. Meanwhile, the rambling gardens are the icing on the cake of this picturesque spot. “Springtime here is all bulbs: daffodils, jonquils, then poppies and tulips,” Andrew says. “In summer, it’s all drying off. Then it comes through to autumn, and that’s when the trees take over. And winter has its own beauty.”

Towering blackwood trees line the driveway entrance to the property, while clusters of golden ash and liquidambar are dotted around one side. On the other, delicate Japanese maples, grand old gums and 120-year-old oaks watch over the dam, which is full of trout. “I’m a mad fly-fisherman,” Andrew says, admitting he’s yet to drop in a line, as his so-called quieter life is just too busy. “It takes a lot to look after a place like this,” he explains. “I may not be going into the office every day, but I’ve never worked so hard in my life.”

Andrew hosts visitors to the region from Melbourne, interstate and even overseas. “It makes me very proud to live in the Macedon Ranges and to be able to share what we have here with folks who are visiting — there’s a lot on offer,” he says, citing the area’s ample eateries, wineries and natural attractions. “I really enjoy seeing people who have come up from town and they’re fried... and within a few days they feel like they’re a local.”

There’s no doubt this mountainside oasis is good for the soul, and Andrew now has a greater sense of achievement living away from the rat race. “There were days when I was working in my old life, and you’d get to the end of the day and think ‘what have I done?’”. He looks forward to continuing his journey in this special part of the world: “I’ve been very lucky in my life — I’ve worked hard, loved what I’ve done, but it was time to settle and connect, and that’s what happened here. There’s something about being up here, I’m very passionate about it and 11 years later I’m still as excited as ever.” **AC**

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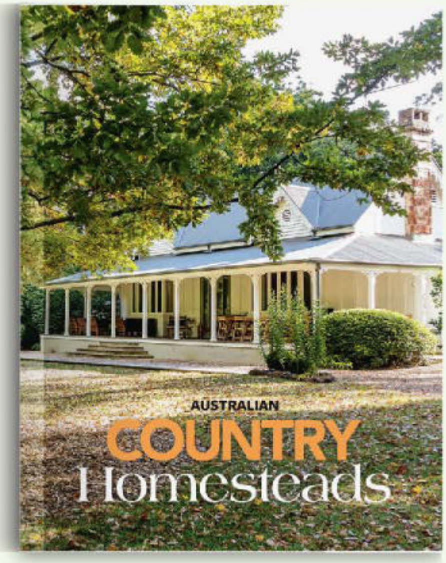
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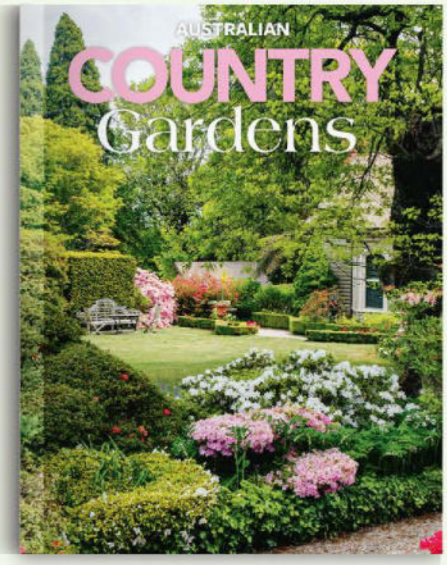
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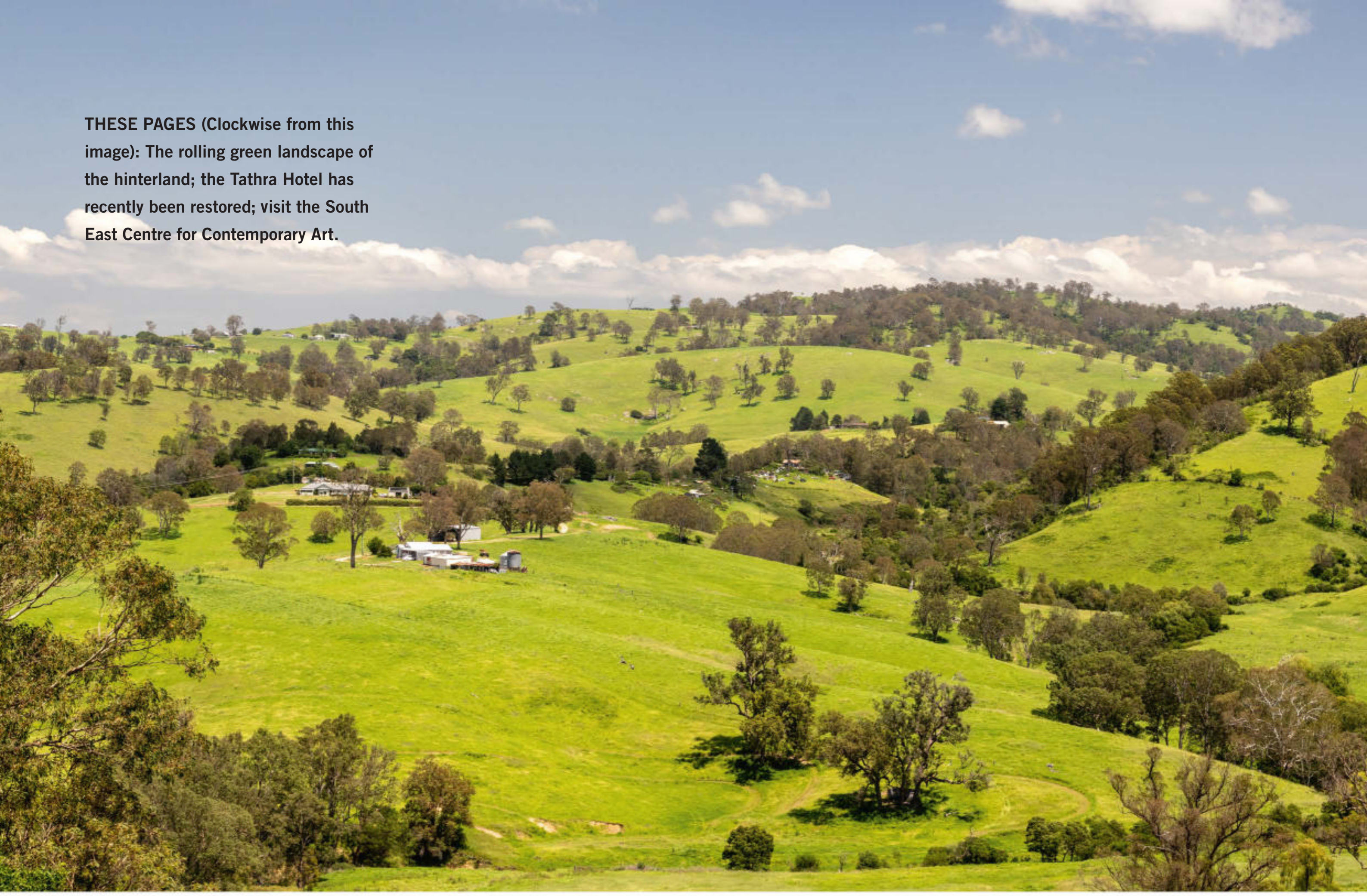
THESE PAGES: East of Eden, the Sapphire Coast sparkles.

bega and beyond

THE SAPPHIRE COAST SPARKLES YEAR-ROUND AND REWARDS VISITORS WITH TIME TO EXPLORE ITS BEAUTIFUL BEACHES AND BOUNTY OF LOCAL PRODUCE.

BY KIRSTY MCKENZIE, **PHOTOGRAPHY** KEN BRASS

THESE PAGES (Clockwise from this image): The rolling green landscape of the hinterland; the Tathra Hotel has recently been restored; visit the South East Centre for Contemporary Art.



TATHRA
Est. HOTEL 1888

It's early morning on a public holiday in Tathra, NSW, but that doesn't deter a group of dedicated ocean swimmers, who've decided to take the leap from the historic wharf to swim the 600-or-so metres to the golden swoop of Tathra Beach. The less adventurous might prefer to complete the swim in the opposite direction and climb the ladder up to the deck rather than jump into the azure waters of the aptly named Sapphire Coast of southern NSW. There's even an annual 1200m Wharf to Waves event in March, when hardy souls swim from the beach to the wharf and back.

Fainter hearts can still enjoy a visit to the wharf, which has been a landmark on Tathra's headland since it was first constructed in 1862. It's been much renovated over the years and is a great spot for whale watching during the migration season (August to November), fishing at any time, catching up on maritime history at the Tathra Wharf Museum and grabbing coffee and a bite at The Wharf Local café.

Established around the same time as the wharf, Tathra township's main purpose was originally as a seaport for the farming community around Bega. In those days, everything was transported by ship. When steamers replaced sailing ships, the voyage to Sydney became safer and more reliable and opened the door to holidaymakers, initially fisherfolk who built weekenders, while later well-to-do farmers and Snowy Mountains Authority staff from Cooma built more substantial beach houses. As car travel became more mainstream, Tathra became a popular camping destination and the town's population of 1700-odd swells dramatically at Easter and during the summer holidays.

Most visitors to Tathra also find their way to the Heritage-listed Tathra Hotel, perched on the other side of the headland from the wharf. The pub, built in 1888 as the Ocean View Hotel, lives up to its original name, with jaw-dropping views over the Pacific Ocean. These days, you'd visit for the breakfast, lunch and dinner options seven days a week, the heritage rooms upstairs or the adjacent motel rooms, the fact that the boutique Humpback Brewery is also located on-site and, mercifully, the lack of pokies. Be sure to take a trip to the loo for the Max Dupain photographs in the corridor and the fascinating insights into war-time society life from the framed pages of *The Sun* newspaper.

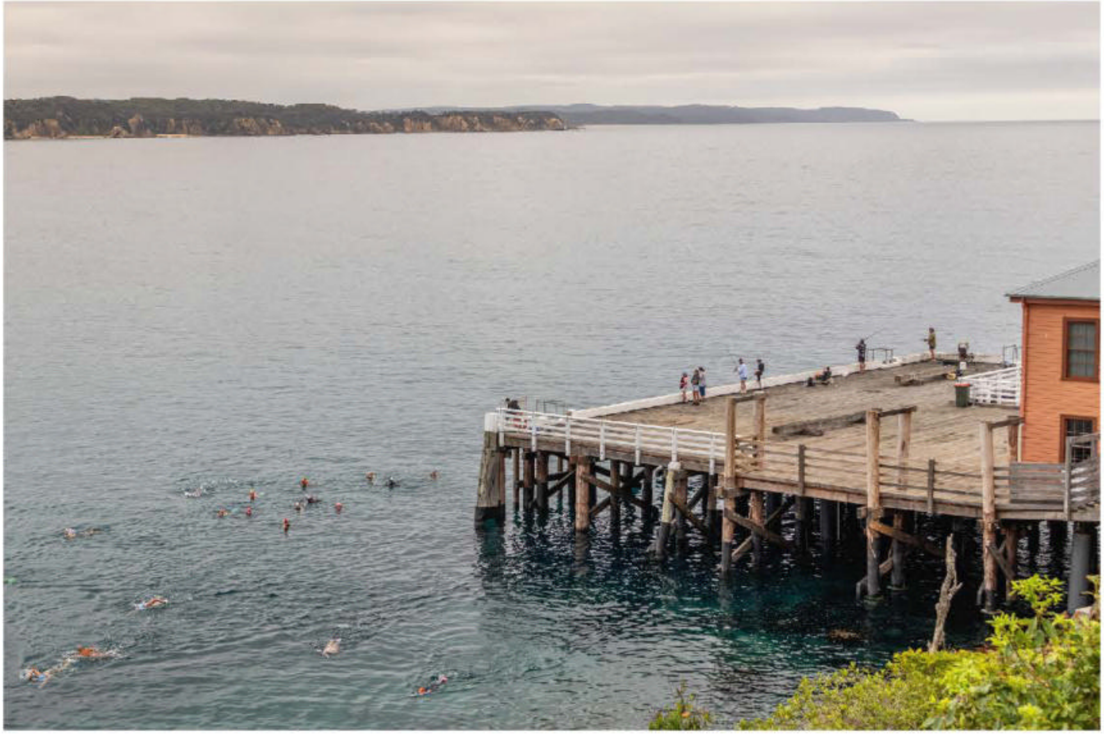
The gateway town to this road trip along the coast is Bega, almost midway between Sydney and Melbourne on the Princes Highway. It would be easy to dismiss Bega, population circa 5000, as an agricultural service town, but visitors who take a closer look are rewarded with insights into the history of dairying in the Bega Valley and tastings of Bega's famous cheese at the Bega Cheese Heritage Centre in a reproduction of the original creamery building. The Spiral Gallery is a cooperative presenting local artists' works, while the South East Centre for Contemporary Art (SECCA) has schmick premises in the centre of town and hosts touring and individual artists' exhibitions, as well as the biennial $50,000 Shirley Hannan National Portrait Award.

It's an 18-kilometre hop from Bega to Tathra and while a detour to the village is highly recommended, the turnoff for the Sapphire Coast Drive to Merimbula and Pambula is 4km before Tathra. From there, it's about 20km to Merimbula and a further 11km back to the highway and down to Pambula. Don't let the distances deceive you, there are pristine beaches and eye-squintingly blue waters tempting swims at Bournda, Tura and Pambula Beaches that are bound to stretch the schedule. There's also a 10km shared bike and walking pathway from Merimbula to Pambula that hugs the lake's edge and then Merimbula Beach before ending at Pambula Beach.

The region is renowned for its seafood in general and Sydney rock oysters in particular and, for deeper insight into the realm of oyster farming, visitors can join "Captain Sponges" Brett Weingarth or his offsider Captain Scotty Cowdrey on a two-hour boat tour of the leases they maintain on Merimbula and Pambula Lakes. While you take a crash course in oyster husbandry, you'll get to taste them at their freshest as the hosts shuck them straight from the water. There's also a detour to inspect the native Angasi species of oyster, also grown on the farm.

There are myriad other opportunities to buy oysters straight from the farms dotted along the coast and one that comes highly recommended is Wheelers Oyster Farm, which combines a seafood restaurant and snapping-fresh fish and chips and oysters to take away

THESE PAGES: (Clockwise from this image) View over Eden's port; dairy country near Bega; early-morning swimmers at Tathra.



or enjoy at tables under umbrellas out the back.

In Pambula, grab a pie or pastry and a coffee from Wild Rye's bakery or drop into Longstocking Brewery for pizza and beer. For more formal dining, the hatted Banksia Restaurant offers set menus featuring local produce in an old bank building. From Pambula, it's 19km down the Princes Highway to Eden, on the northern end of Twofold Bay and a fishing and whaling port since the earliest days of European settlement.

There's much to learn about the grisly, though fascinating, stories of the whaling industry and the unsuccessful vision of 1840s' banker and entrepreneur Benjamin Boyd to build Boydtown, which he 'modestly' named for himself as the headquarters of his whaling business. Today, all that is left of his grand dream is the Seahorse Inn, a pleasant spot for a meal with a sea view, and Boyd's Tower, an imposing sandstone structure that was designed, though never used, as a lighthouse, but did become a key lookout for whalers to spot passing whales.

Drop into Eden's Killer Whale Museum to learn more about the industry, which in colonial times supplied whale oil for lighting, lubrication and soap manufacture and baleen for women's corsetry, hooped petticoats, umbrella ribs and riding crops. Fun fact: Although it was known as whalebone, baleen is actually dried tough skin.

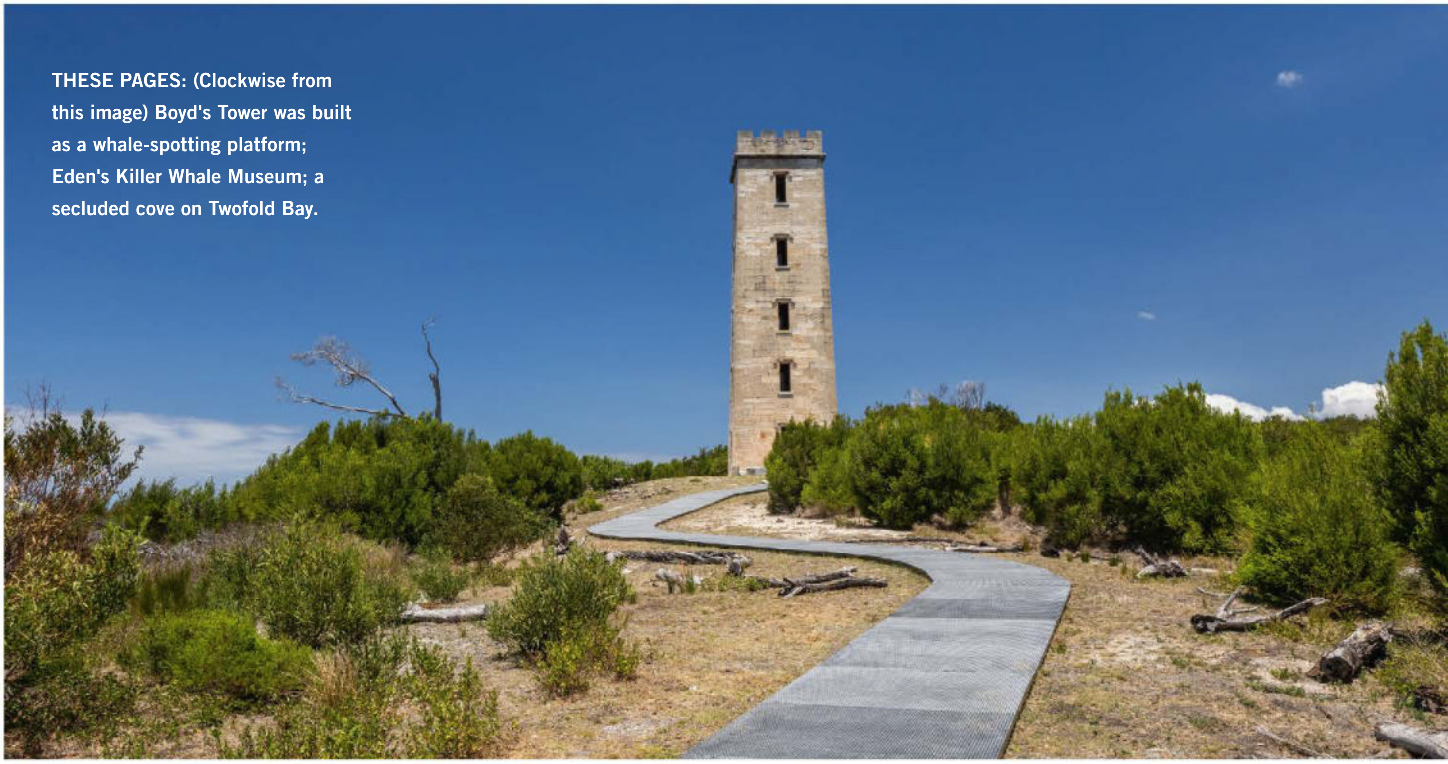
The 6.7m-long skeleton of Old Tom is one of many features of the museum and visitors will gain insight into how the leader of the orca whale pod collaborated with three generations of the Davidson family of whalers, they claimed, for almost 90 years. In fact, the extraordinary hunting partnership of wild animals with man herding baleen whales goes back way before European settlement, as the traditional owners, the Yuin people, also worked with the orcas to capture baleen whales. The orcas, aka the killers of Eden, were said to alert whalers to the approach of their prey by tail flopping and then guiding the boats to the locations. It's said Old Tom collaborated with the Davidsons because they knew the tradition of "the law of the tongue". This involved anchoring the dead whales close to the shore and leaving them for a couple of days so the orcas could feast on their favourite tidbits — the tongue, lips and genitals — before dragging them back to their whaling station, which, when it closed in 1929, was the longest-operating land-based facility in Australia.

If that gives you a taste for more whaling history, head south around the bay to visit the Seahorse Inn, the remnants of the Davidson Whaling Station and Boyds Tower. Boyds Tower is also the starting point for the 32km Light to Light Walk, which follows the coastline to Green Cape Lighthouse, the most southerly lighthouse in NSW.

Returning to Eden, take a walk around the fishing boats and Visitor Information Centre at Snug Cove, before grabbing a bite at the Hotel Australasia's Pikes Bistro. From there, it's a 54km drive up the highway back to Bega. If you happen to be there on a weekend, be sure to drop into the North of Eden craft gin distillery, a boutique facility run by Gavin Hughes, who can claim to be one of very few distillers in the country using Australian-grown juniper from a farm at Bibbenluke on the Monaro high plains. It would be hard to imagine a more fitting place to toast the unique character of this region and the people who colour in its details. **AC**

EDEN KILLER WHALE MUSEUM
CAVALCADE OF
TWOFOLD BAY HISTORY

> *The extraordinary hunting partnership of wild animals with man herding baleen whales goes back way before European settlement.*



THESE PAGES: (Clockwise from this image) Boyd's Tower was built as a whale-spotting platform; Eden's Killer Whale Museum; a secluded cove on Twofold Bay.

ADVENTURE KINGS
10'6"

WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK

- **Tathra Hotel, Tathra** tathrahotel.com.au
- **Wharf Local, Tathra** thewharflocal.com.au
- **Valentina, Merimbula** valentinamerimbula.com
- **Dulcie's Cottage, Merimbula** dulcies.com.au
- **Wheelers Seafood Restaurant & Oyster Farm, Merimbula** wheelersoysters.com.au
- **Longstocking Brewery, Pambula** longstocking.com.au
- **Wild Rye's Baking Co, Pambula** wildryes.com.au
- **Banksia, Pambula** banksiarestaurant.com.au
- **North of Eden Gin, Stony Creek** northofeden.com.au

WHERE TO STAY

- **The Homestead, Bega** lotteshjem.com
- **Tanja Lagoon Camp, Tathra** tanjalagooncamp.com.au
- **Tathra Hotel, Tathra** tahrahotel.com.au
- **Lottes Hjem, Pambula** lotteshjem.com
- **Currajong Retreat, Burragate** currajongretreat.com
- **Hotel Australasia, Eden** hotelaustralasia.com.au
- **Seahorse Inn & Villas, Eden** seahorseinnhotel.com.au

WHAT TO DO

- **Bega Cheese Heritage Centre, Bega** heritagecentre.com.au
- **SECCA, Bega** secca.com.au
- **Eden Killer Whale Museum, Eden** killerwhalemuseum.com.au
- **Sapphire Coastal Adventures Whale Watching, Eden** sapphirecoastaladventures.com.au
- **Captain Sponges Oyster Tours, Pambula Lake Jetty & Wharf** magicaloystertours.com.au

THESE PAGES: (Clockwise from left) The boardwalk from Merimbula to Pambula; fish and chips from Wheelers Seafood Restaurant and Oyster Farm; a tasting paddle at the Tathra Hotel; paddleboarding on calm water; Bega Cheese Heritage Centre; Seahorse Inn & Villas.

THESE PAGES: An aerial view of Jenny and husband Taff's 121-hectare property.

striking gold

FORMER NURSE TURNED NURSERY PROPRIETOR JENNY HANCOCK HAS SPENT THE BEST PART OF FIVE DECADES BUILDING A SHOWPIECE GARDEN IN THE NSW CENTRAL WEST.

BY KIRSTY MCKENZIE, **PHOTOGRAPHY** KEN BRASS

As someone who used to run a plant nursery, Jenny Hancock confesses that she's probably given away as many plants, cuttings and seeds as she's sold. "That's how gardens grow," she says. "People who are into plants love to share their knowledge and enthusiasm."

Jenny and her husband Taff (Paul) live on a 300-acre (121-hectare) farm near Blayney in the NSW Central West. They've run poll Herefords and prime lambs since they moved to Taff's family property as newlyweds in 1976. Taff's grandfather was the manager of the nearby Last Chance gold mine and, when that closed, the shafts were flooded, creating a water supply for the farm, which they named Whim Park, after a mining implement similar to a windlass. "They call this area the cocktail belt for its beautiful soil," Jenny explains. "When we started, we had water, but it was gravity fed down to the house. Now it's pressure pumped, which makes gardening a lot easier."

Having grown up in a family of gardeners, Jenny says the garden when she arrived at Whim Park was much smaller than it is today. Almost 50 years and four extensions down the track, it's expanded into box gum-studded paddocks with birch groves and ornamental trees and covers almost 4.5 acres (1.8ha), including the poultry sheds. There are birds everywhere, from peacocks Percy and Priscilla and guinea fowl to Silkie hens Sophie and Sonia, a raft of call

THESE PAGES: (Clockwise from this image) A garden 50 years in the making; a place to sit among the trees; roses in bloom; Jenny with one of her Silkie hens.

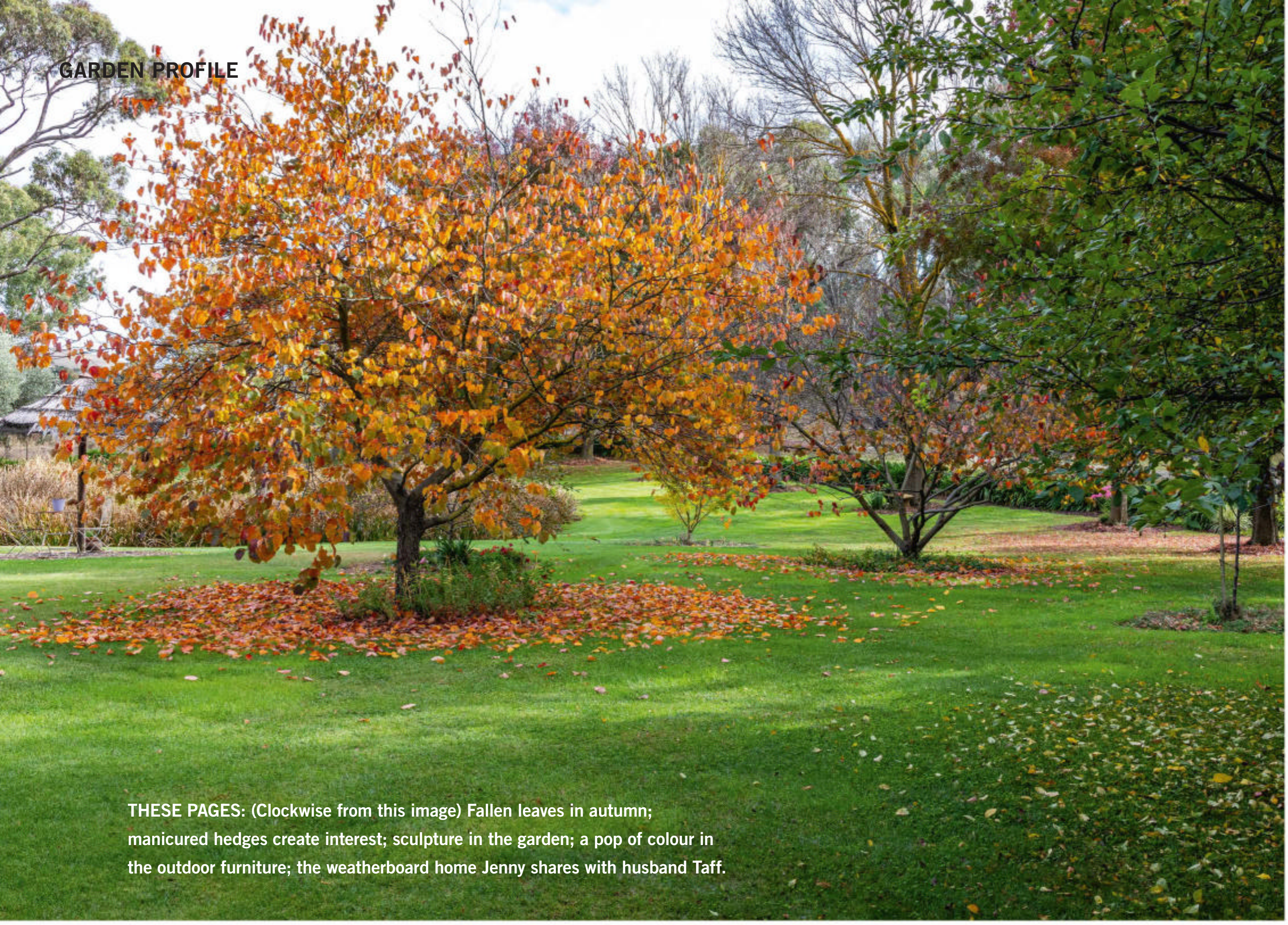
> *“I was often rewarded with seeds and cuttings and they all found a place in the garden.*

ducks and Sussex and Plymouth Rock hens that keep the family in eggs.

While there’s always something for the eye to feast on, the garden comes into its own in spring, when the crab apples lining the entry drive bloom pink and the forest pansy (*Cercis canadensis*) sprouts stunning magenta flowers along the bare stem. In autumn, its heart-shaped leaves turn burgundy and golden orange and carpet the lawn with colour, while the ashes, birches and weeping maples lend their russet tones to the landscape.

A nurse in her pervious life, Jenny says her many patients have provided inspiration, advice and plants. She points to a Chinese lantern, which thrives near the garden and explains that it began back in the day when the wards had to be cleared of flowers at night, because it was thought that they depleted the oxygen in the room. “I pinched a seed from a flower,” she says. “For some reason, they do really well here. I must have given away thousands of cuttings through the years, but not many

THESE PAGES: Whether through cuttings, visiting friends and family or guests staying in the on-site cottage, Jenny loves sharing the garden at Whim Park with others, including her menagerie of bird friends.



THESE PAGES: (Clockwise from this image) Fallen leaves in autumn; manicured hedges create interest; sculpture in the garden; a pop of colour in the outdoor furniture; the weatherboard home Jenny shares with husband Taff.

people have as much luck as I have growing them."

Towards the end of her nursing career, Jenny was a community nurse and clocked up hundreds of kilometres every week visiting patients at home. "Wound care was my thing," she says. "I was often rewarded with seeds and cuttings and they all found a place in the garden. It was a patient who taught me about the importance of spraying with sulphur lime after pruning the roses.

When the birds don't get to them, the fruit trees deliver figs, quince, peaches, nectarines, apples, cherries and almonds. While in summer, the agapanthus provide a lilac blue salute along the driveway. "It takes 17 hours to deadhead them all," Jenny says.

Winters are extreme, and the region usually experiences a couple of snowfalls. "The temperature often drops to minus four or five," Jenny says. "Minus 10 has been recorded. I love it when there are icicles on the trees."

She adds that summers have been getting hotter with 35°C highs registered in recent years. "Because it's also been so dry, mulch is really important," Jenny says. "We spread up to 40 bales of lucerne at a time and that job takes me, my friend Nicole Fortuna and a couple of grandkids up to 30 hours to complete." Applying slow-release fertiliser is another important task each spring and autumn.

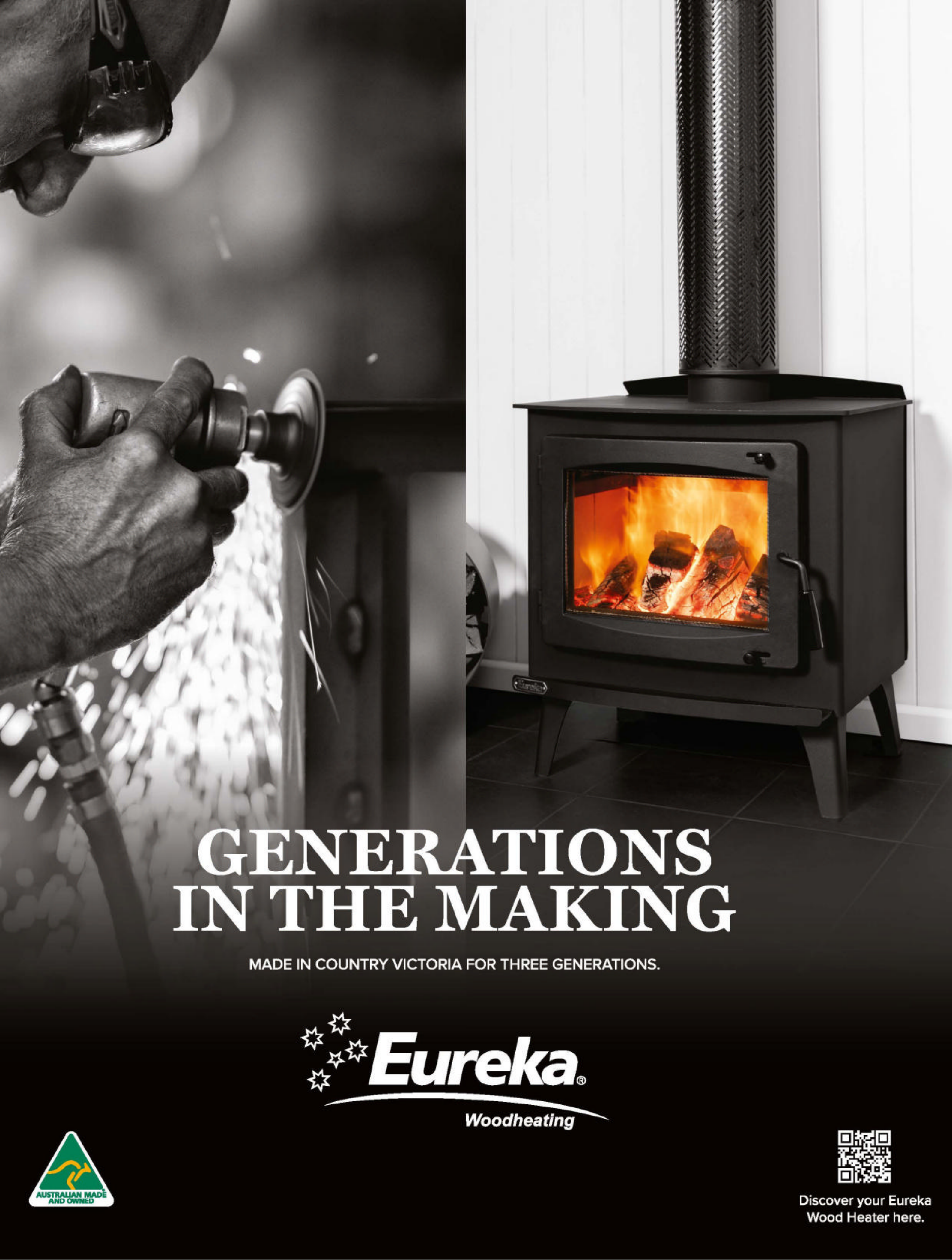
As Jenny scaled back her nursing career, it was an obvious choice to open a nursery. The main building was a reconstruction of the original dray shed that served the farm from 1920 to 2010, when it was damaged by a storm. "In 2010, I went to Bali and came back with a container load of pots and garden furniture," Jenny recalls. "After that, I mainly sourced homewares, garden art and pots at gift fairs. I also visited plant trade days and wholesale nurseries delivered on a regular basis. In winter, I purchased hundreds of bare-root fruit trees, ornamentals and gorgeous hellebores from Victoria."

Although the Drayshed Nursery is now officially closed, Jenny admits she still sells the occasional plant and takes orders from long-term customers. These days, Jenny has converted the dray shed for guest accommodation and she also offers a one-bedroom cottage adjacent to the house on Airbnb.

"With paying guests and visiting family, there's rarely a dull moment," she says. "We also enjoy having friends and neighbours in for happy hour. It's a great opportunity to share the pleasure of the garden, which, after all, is the main reason for creating it in the first place." **AC**

For more information on the accommodation, find the Drayshed and Drayshed Cottage on Instagram and Airbnb.

THIS PAGE: (From top) Yet another quaint spot to sit outside; a bedroom in the home.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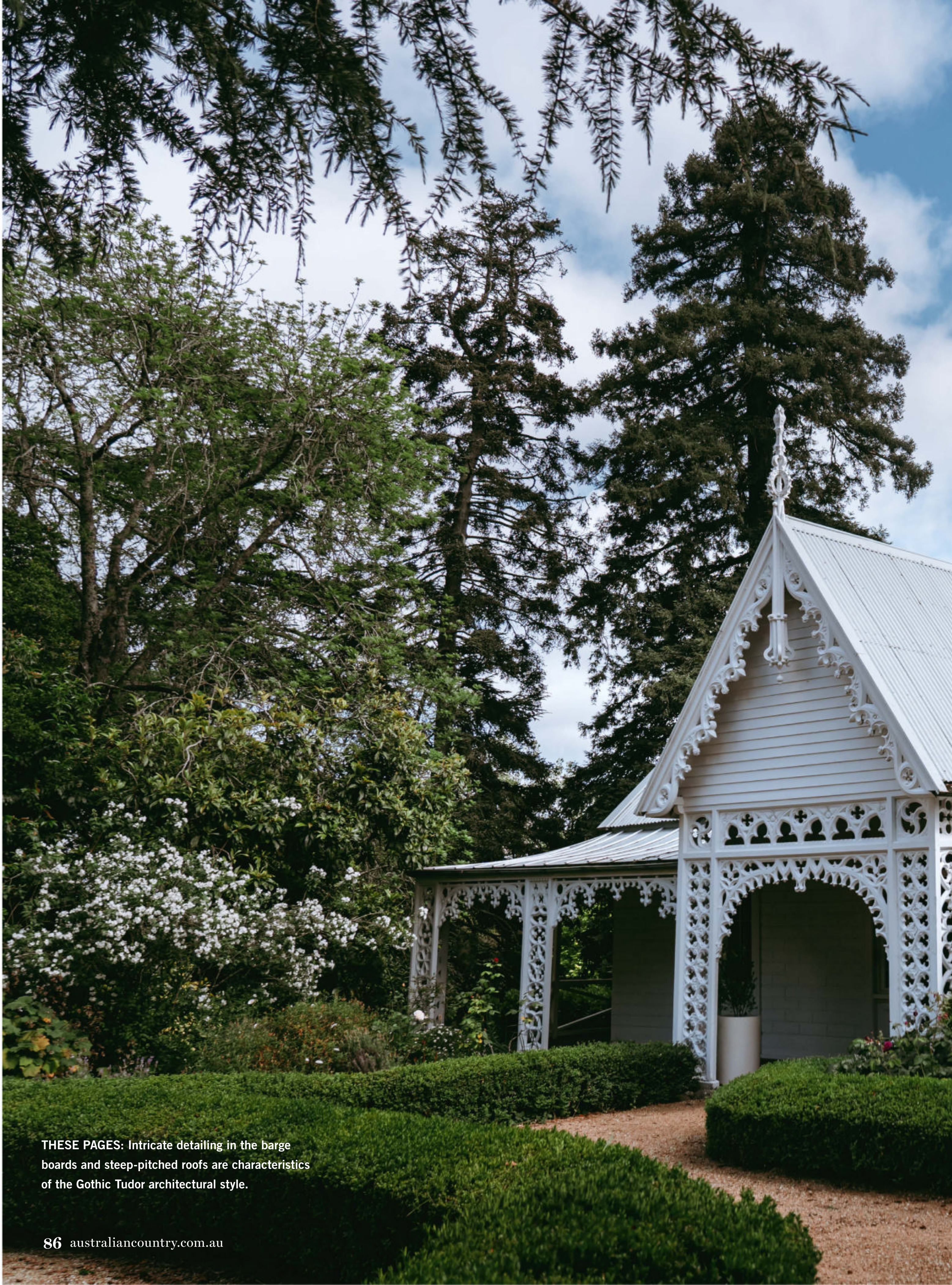


THESE PAGES: Intricate detailing in the barge boards and steep-pitched roofs are characteristics of the Gothic Tudor architectural style.

ballantrae bounty

A FORMER MELBOURNE COUPLE HAS GIVEN A GRAND OLD DAME OF A HOME NEAR BALLARAT A MUCH-NEEDED FACELIFT.

BY KIRSTY MCKENZIE, PHOTOGRAPHY DYLAN RIDSDALE

THESE PAGES: (Clockwise from opposite top) Anthony and Dahlia are very much at home at Ballantrae; a wine cellar; mood lighting and angular lines set the scene in a hallway.

Anthony Ingerson says he knew he wanted to buy Ballantrae before he'd even set foot inside the Heritage-listed 1857 Gothic Tudor homestead at Buninyong, just south of Ballarat in Victoria. The former Melbourne Football Club player turned construction industry project manager had spent a lot of time in Ballarat, where he was working for Haymes Paints during the COVID lockdowns, when he and his partner, Dahlia Bell, decided to start looking for acreage on which to build a home.

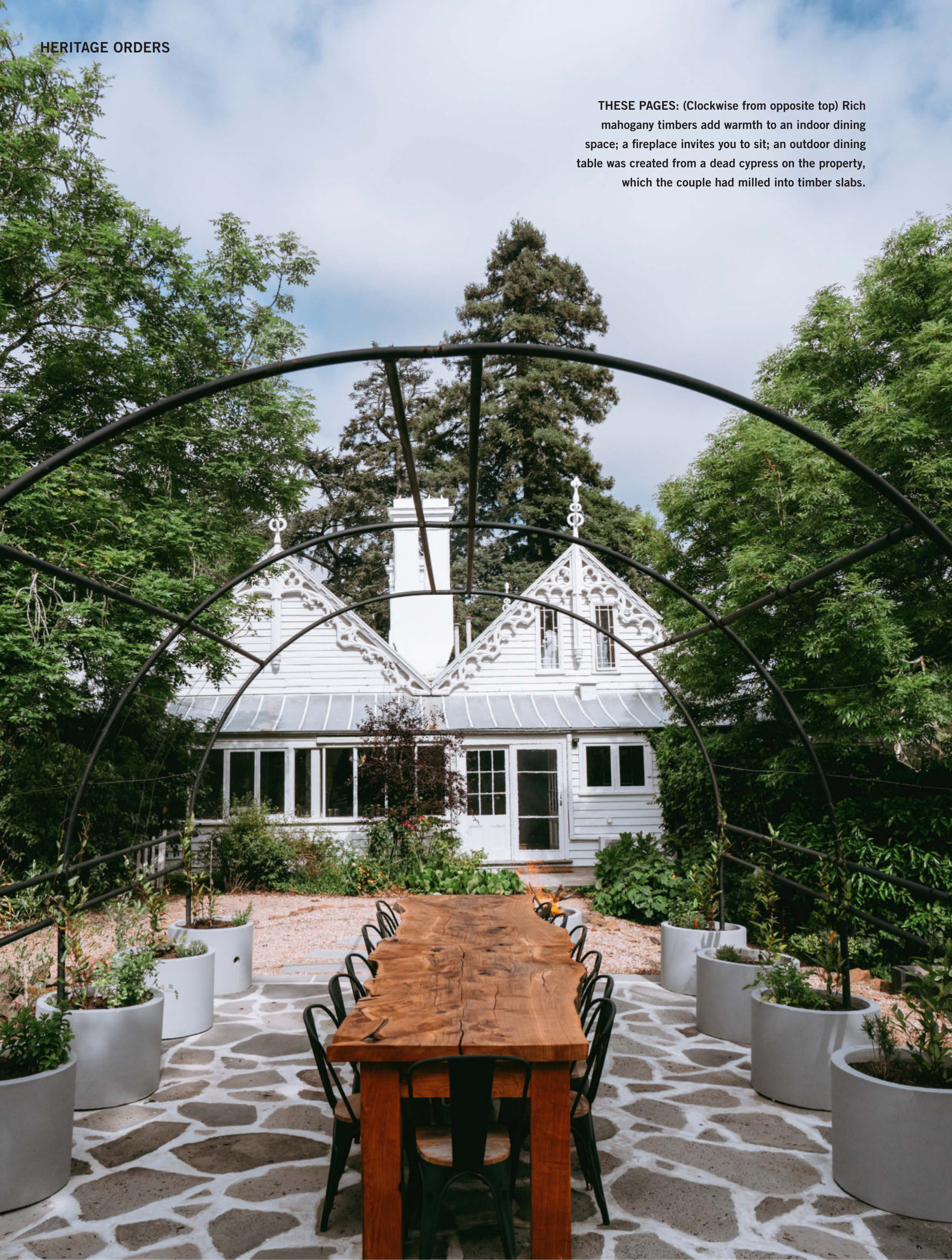
"Dahlia grew up in Yorkshire, in the UK, where her grandfather had a farm," Anthony explains. "After living through the pandemic in [the Melbourne bayside suburb of] Sandringham, I think we both realised we wanted a bit of space around us. When we found Ballantrae, it and an adjoining five-acre (two-hectare) block were on the market. We spent a weekend designing the house of our dreams, only to find it had already been sold."

Fortunately, that sale fell through, so Anthony arranged with the owner to come and inspect the property. "He turned out to be Peter Hiscock, who for 22 years was the director of Sovereign Hill, Ballarat's living museum of the gold rushes," he says. "He'd lived in Ballantrae for 40 years, so naturally had a deep connection to the property and concern about who he was going to sell it to. His wife, Yvette, had recently moved into a nursing home and the house had become too much for him to manage. So we shelved the idea of a new build and decided to focus our efforts on Ballantrae homestead. I've renovated a lot of houses in my time and I could see the potential before I'd even stepped inside."

The first record of the land on which the homestead stands dates to 1854, when it was taken up by Patricius Welsh, the son of a Dublin doctor, who was a Melbourne merchant and landowner. He's recorded as being insolvent in 1843, but regained his fortune during the gold rushes of the 1850s. Patricius sold the property with its six-year-old homestead in 1863 to his tenant, Thomas Coates. It then remained in the Coates family until 1944, when it was sold to Irene Lippiart. However, a Miss Coates lived in the house for a further 15 years after the sale.

The lace-encrusted building forms a square, composed by two cross-gable roofs with a central porch over the entry. The original hardwood shingle roofs are still in place, though were covered with corrugated iron in the 1870s, and the exterior of the building is clad in hardwood weatherboard. The most dramatic elements are the external decorations with elaborately carved Gothic-style barge boards from a book of patterns by the 19th-century English architect and Gothic revivalist Augustus Pugin. Each of the gables has a finial and the one on the apex of the porch is the most elaborate. Like the barge boards, the verandah valances and pilasters are carved from Baltic pine.

When the Hiscocks came along in 1981, Ballantrae had



THESE PAGES: (Clockwise from opposite top) Rich mahogany timbers add warmth to an indoor dining space; a fireplace invites you to sit; an outdoor dining table was created from a dead cypress on the property, which the couple had milled into timber slabs.

THESE PAGES: Dahlia's flair for design is evident throughout the home, with its elegant, timeless style.

been turned into a boarding house. They embarked on many updates including enclosing some of the verandahs, replacing the ladder to the attic with stairs and bringing the kitchen from the basement to the first floor. They'd also inherited a garden that included lots of noteworthy mature conifers such as Blue Atlas cedars, Bunya pines, Norway spruces, California redwoods and Himalayan cedars. Other mature specimens include bay trees, horizontal wych elms, American weeping elms, cordyline palms and silk tassel bushes.

By the time Anthony and Dahlia arrived on the scene, the garden was overgrown, so much so that six-foot five-inch (196-centimetre) tall Anthony says he couldn't walk around without hitting his head. They embarked on a huge clear out and had one massive dead cypress milled into timber slabs, which now feature throughout the property, including as a giant outdoor table that can seat 20, kitchen benchtops and bedroom furniture.

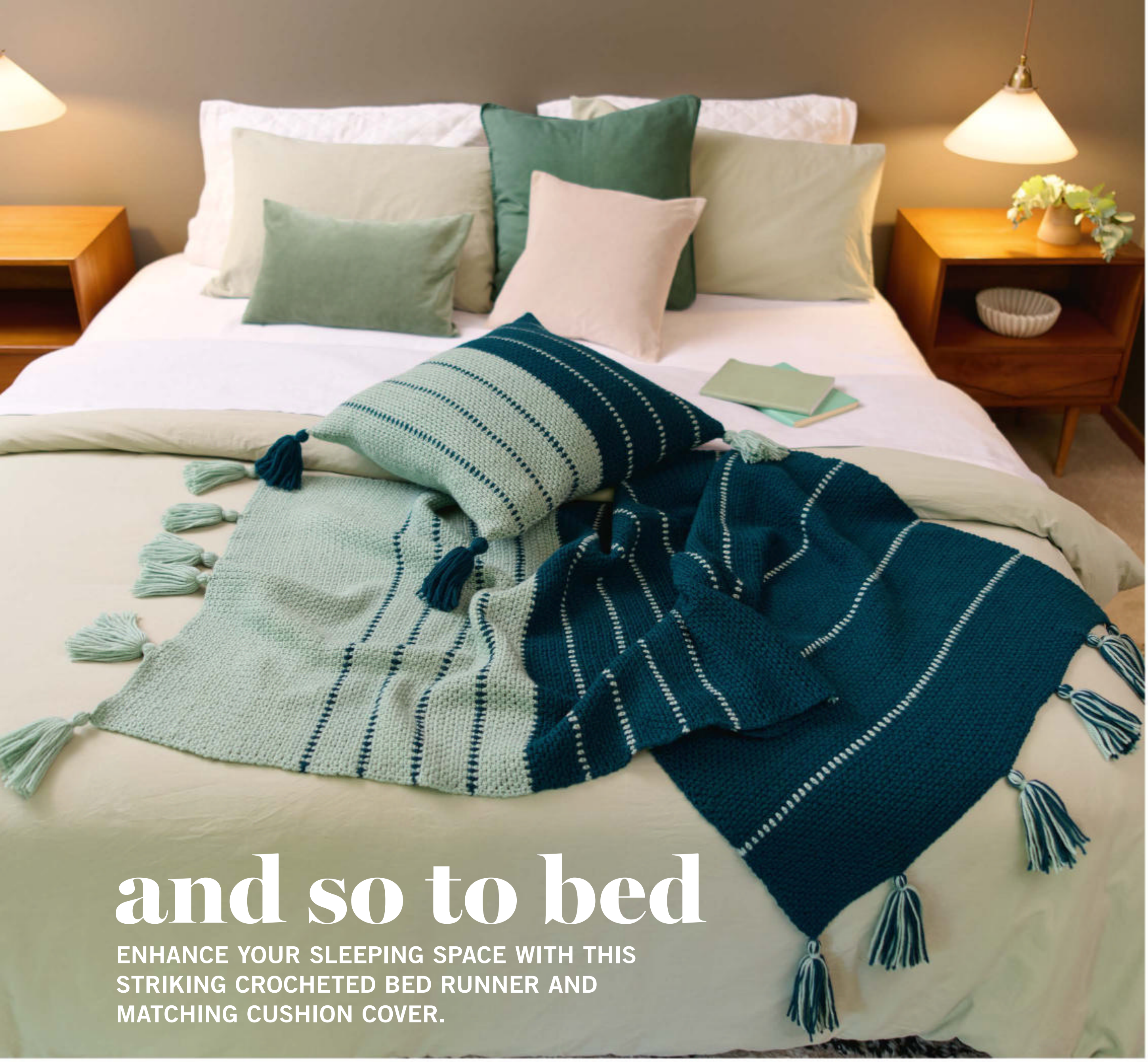
"Internally, we were determined to respect the integrity and flow of the house," Anthony says. "We were greatly encouraged by Peter in this, though we did modernise the bathrooms and rearrange the layout a bit to make it better for contemporary living."

The renovations nonetheless were not without their trials and ended up taking a year. At one point, Dahlia, who is a total perfectionist, found it all too much and she and Anthony separated. Fortunately, they reunited in time for her to exercise her considerable flair for interior styling. Dahlia is currently completing a design course majoring in photography and her talent for composition and colour is evident in every room.

"We've been together for 10 years," Anthony explains. "Dahlia is a model and was here from the UK with a fashion stylist friend when we met on the last night of their holiday. She came back with her sister a year later and we've been a couple ever since. Even when we were separated, she agreed to style the house for me."

Given their relationship with the Ballarat-based Haymes family, it was a no-brainer that they would use their paints. "The interiors used to be olive green and heritage red," Anthony explains. "We knew we wanted to make it more contemporary, but we went through about 50 sample pots before we settled on the final colours. We ended up going with bolder colours than we initially thought but, true to her style, Dahlia has really nailed it."

Anthony adds that while the original intention may have been to do the house up for sale and build new on the adjoining block, nothing could now be further from their minds. "We're relishing the quieter pace," he says. "Buninyong has a population of 2000-odd and we're enjoying getting to know the people in the community. The pub has just been renovated and there's a community bakery with an honour box that sells baked goods once a month. Instead of walking to the beach, we get to walk on our own land, with no traffic to worry about. Peter Hiscock entrusted us to honour Ballantrae's heritage and we truly do feel we are its custodians." **AC**



and so to bed

ENHANCE YOUR SLEEPING SPACE WITH THIS STRIKING CROCHETED BED RUNNER AND MATCHING CUSHION COVER.

MEASUREMENTS

Bed Runner

Width (approx)	75cm
Length (approx)	160cm

Cushion Cover

To Fit Cushion	55cm x 55cm

CLECKHEATON COUNTRY 8 PLY 50g balls

Bed Runner

1st Colour (C1 – 1962 Soft Green)	8
2nd Colour (C2 – 2308 Mallard)	16

Cushion Cover

1st Colour (C1 – 1962 Soft Green)	5
2nd Colour (C2 – 2308 Mallard)	5

Use only the yarn specified. Other yarns are likely to produce different results. Quantities are approximate as they can vary between crocheters. Ensure all yarn of the same colour is from the same dye lot.

HOOK AND EXTRAS

- 4mm crochet hook or size needed to give correct tension.
- 55cm x 55cm cushion insert.
- piece of cardboard 15cm wide for tassels.
- wool needle for finishing.

TENSION

19 sts and 20 rows to 10cm over patt, using 4mm hook.

Bed Runner –

Correct tension is not essential for this Bed Runner, however stated measurements and yarn quantities are based on this tension.

Cushion Cover –

To work a tension square, using 4mm hook, make 31ch.

Work 30 rows patt as for Bed Runner. Fasten off.

The fit of your cushion cover will be determined by your tension.

If your tension is loose (fewer sts than specified in 10cm) your cover will be larger and you may need more yarn and a larger insert. If it is tight (more sts than specified in 10cm) your cover will be a firmer fit.

ABBREVIATIONS

NOTE – Australian/UK crochet terminology used throughout.

beg = begin, beginning; ch = chain; dc = double crochet; patt = pattern; rep = repeat; sp, sps = space, spaces; st, sts = stitch, stitches; yoh = yarn over hook

BED RUNNER

Using 4mm hook and C1, make 143ch.
1st row – Miss 1ch, 1dc in next ch, * 1ch, miss 1ch, 1dc in next ch, rep from * to last ch, 1dc in last ch … 142 sts (72dc).
2nd row – 1ch, 1dc in first dc, * 1ch, miss next dc, 1dc in next ch sp, rep from * to last dc, 1dc in last dc.
Last row forms patt.
Rep last row 50 times.

BEG STRIPES –

NOTE – When changing colour, work in old colour until final yoh, leave old colour on wrong side of work, then use new colour to complete st.
Using C2 (working over C1) work 1 row.
Using C1, work 11 rows.
Rep last 12 rows 3 times.
Using C2, work 11 rows.
Using C1 (working over C2) work 1 row.
Rep last 12 rows 3 times.
Using C2, work 25 rows.
Using C1 (working over C2) work 1 row.
Rep last 26 rows 4 times.
Using C2, work 25 rows. Fasten off.

TO MAKE UP

Sew in ends.

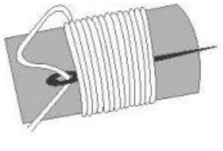
TASSELS –

Using C1 make 6 tassels and attach evenly along C1 end securely. Using C1 and C2 together, make 6 tassels and attach evenly along C2 end securely. Trim evenly.

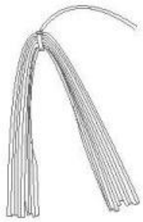
CUSHION COVER (make 2)

Using 4mm hook and C1, make 95ch.
1st row – Miss 1ch, 1dc in next ch, * 1ch, miss 1ch, 1dc in next ch, rep from * to last ch, 1dc in last ch … 94 sts (48dc).
2nd row – 1ch, 1dc in first dc, * 1ch, miss next dc, 1dc in next ch sp, rep from * to last st, 1dc in last dc.
Last row forms patt.
Work a further 9 rows.

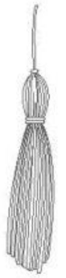
TASSELS



1. Wind yarn (closely together) around cardboard to desired tassel thickness. Cut yarn approx 20cm from tassel and thread this through a wool needle. Slip needle under all strands along one side of cardboard and tie a knot securely around the strands. (This yarn can be used to attach the tassel to your item when tassel is complete).

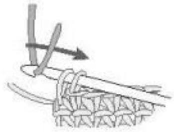


2. Cut the strands on the opposite side of the cardboard to the tie made in step 1.



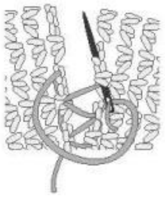
3. Cut a separate piece of yarn approx 30cm long. Wrap tightly below top knot to secure strands. Hold firmly and thread end into wool needle. Stitch end to centre of tassel. Trim tassel ends evenly.

CHANGING COLOUR



When changing colour, work in old colour until final yarn over hook step of the last stitch remains. Use the new colour to complete the stitch.

HALF MATTRESS STITCH SEAM



1. Put the 2 pieces next to each other, right side up and edges together.
2. Bring threaded needle up through centre of first edge stitch.
3. Insert needle in centre of first edge stitch on other piece, then out again at centre of next edge stitch on that side.
4. Insert needle in centre of same edge stitch on first piece, then out again at centre of next edge stitch.
5. Swap from side to side, always going into the centre of the stitch that the last stitch on that side came out of.

Keep the seam firm, but do not pull the yarn too tightly – the seam should not be any tighter than the crochet fabric.

BEG STRIPES –

NOTE – When changing colour, work in old colour until final yoh, leave old colour on wrong side of work, then use new colour to complete st.
Using C2 (working over C1) work 1 row.
Using C1, work 11 rows.
Rep last 12 rows twice.
Using C2, work 11 rows.
Using C1 (working over C2) work 1 row.
Rep last 12 rows twice.
Using C2, work 11 rows. Fasten off.

TO MAKE UP

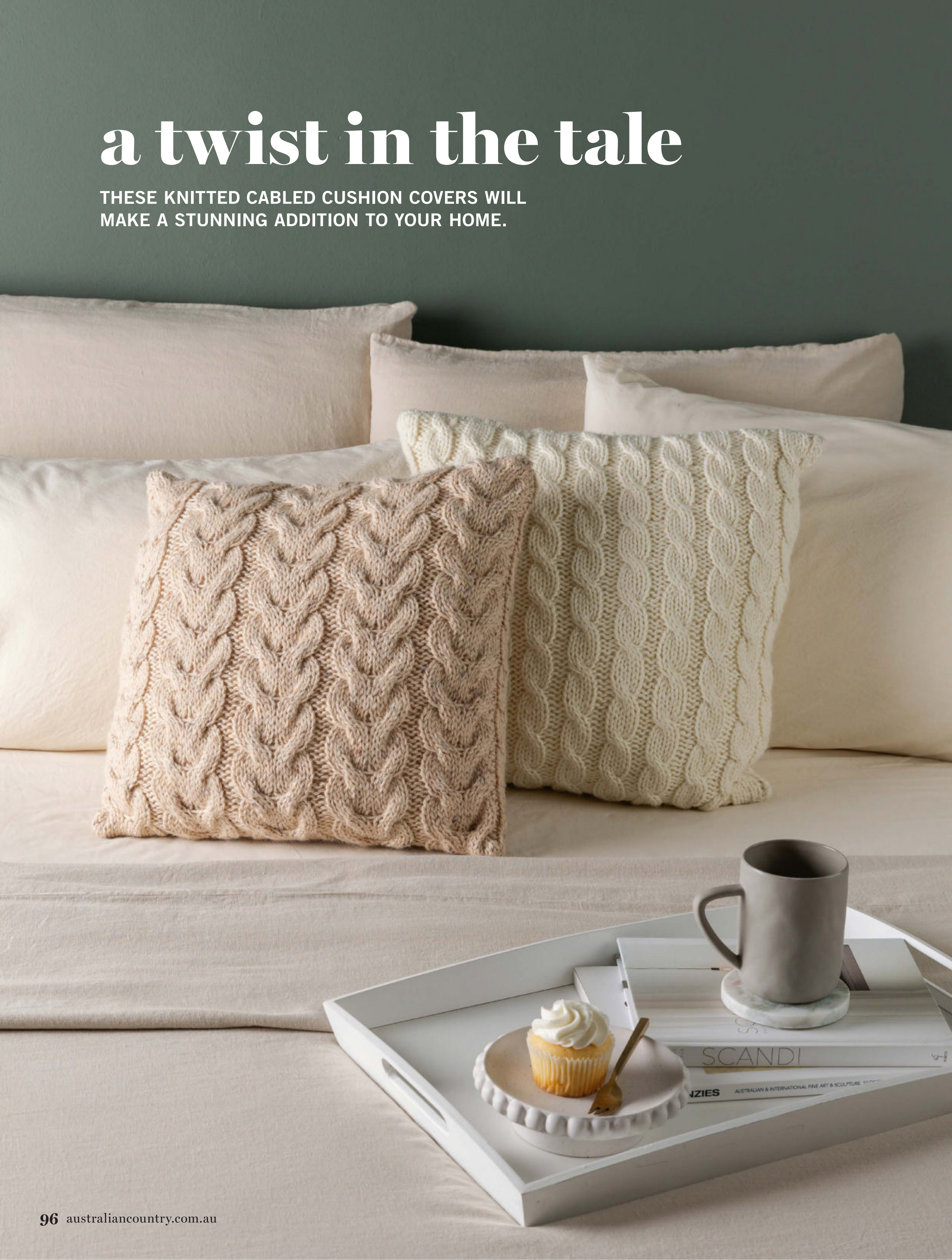
With right side facing and using Half Mattress stitch seam, join 3 sides. Place cushion insert inside and join remaining edge. Sew in ends.

TASSELS –

Using C1 make 2 tassels and attach one to each C2 corner securely. Using C2 make 2 tassels and attach one to each C1 corner securely. Trim evenly.

a twist in the tale

THESE KNITTED CABLED CUSHION COVERS WILL MAKE A STUNNING ADDITION TO YOUR HOME.


SCANDI
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MEASUREMENTS

To Fit Cushion 50cm x 50cm
PATONS FAIRHAVEN 100g balls
Colourway 1
Quantity (9000 Fleece) 4
Colourway 2
Quantity (9001
Winter Wheat Fleck) 4

Use only the yarn specified. Other yarns are likely to produce different results. Quantities are approximate as they can vary between knitters. Ensure all yarn is from the same dye lot.

NEEDLES AND EXTRAS

- 1 pair 7mm (UK 2) knitting needles or size needed to give correct tension.
- cable needle.
- wool needle for finishing.
- 50cm square cushion insert.

TENSION

13.5 sts and 18 rows to 10cm over stocking st (knit 1 row, purl 1 row), using 7mm needles.
To work a tension square, using 7mm needles, cast on 20 sts.
Work 26 rows stocking st.
Cast off loosely.
The fit of your cushion cover will be determined by your tension.
If your tension is loose (fewer sts than specified in 10cm) your cover will be larger and you may need more yarn and a larger insert. If it is tight (more sts than specified in 10cm) your cover will be a firmer fit.

ABBREVIATIONS

alt = alternate; beg = begin, beginning; C4F = cable 4 stitches to the front – Slip next 2 sts onto cable needle and leave at front of work, K2, then K2 from cable needle; C6B = cable 6 stitches to the back – Slip next 3 sts onto cable needle and leave at back of work, K3, then K3 from cable needle; C6F = cable 6 stitches to the front – Slip next 3 sts onto cable needle and leave at front of work, K3, then K3 from cable needle; foll, folls = following, follows; K = knit; patt = pattern; P = purl; rep = repeat; st, sts = stitch, stitches

FIRST PANEL

Using 7mm needles, cast on 68 sts.
Set up row (wrong side) – K2, * P4, K2, rep from * to end.
BEG CABLE PATT A –
Work rows 1 to 8 inclusive from graph for cable patt A or written instructions as folls –
1st row – P2, * K4, P2, rep from * to end.
2nd and foll alt rows – K2, * P4, K2, rep from * to end.
3rd row – P2, * K4, P2, C4F, P2, rep from * to last 6 sts, K4, P2.
5th row – As 1st row.
7th row – P2, * C4F, P2, K4, P2, rep from * to last 6 sts, C4F, P2.
8th row – As 2nd row.
Last 8 rows form cable patt A for First Panel.
Cont in patt until First Panel measures approx 44cm from beg, ending with a 1st or 5th row.
Cast off loosely in patt on wrong side.

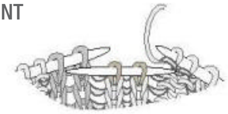
SECOND PANEL

Using 7mm needles, cast on 72 sts.
Set up row (wrong side) – K2, * P12, K2, rep from * to end.
BEG CABLE PATT B –
Work rows 1 to 8 inclusive from graph for cable patt B or written instructions as folls –
1st row – P2, * K12, P2, rep from * to end.
2nd and foll alt rows – K2, * P12, K2, rep from * to end.
3rd row – P2, * K12, P2, C6B, C6F, P2, rep from * once, K12, P2.
5th row – As 1st row.
7th row – P2, * C6B, C6F, P2, K12, P2, rep from * once, C6B, C6F, P2.
8th row – As 2nd row.
Last 8 rows form cable patt B for Second Panel.
Cont in patt until Second Panel measures approx. same as First Panel from beg, ending with a 1st or 5th row.
Cast off loosely in patt on wrong side.

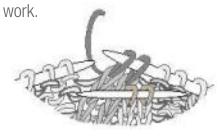
TO MAKE UP

With wrong sides of Cushion Panels together and using Mattress stitch, join 3 sides, easing stitches and rows to fit. Place cushion insert inside and join remaining edge.

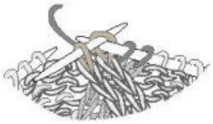
C4F – CABLE 4 STITCHES TO THE FRONT



1. Slip the next 2 stitches purlways onto a cable needle and hold them at the front of the work.



2. Knit the following 2 stitches from the left needle.



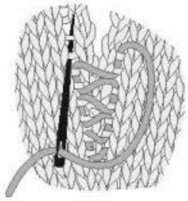
3. Knit the 2 stitches from the cable needle.

Completed cable will twist to the left.

To work C6F, slip 3 sts onto cable needle and hold at front of work, knit next 3 sts then knit sts from cable needle.

To work C6B, slip 3 sts onto cable needle and hold at back of work, knit next 3 sts then knit sts from cable needle.

MATTRESS STITCH SEAM



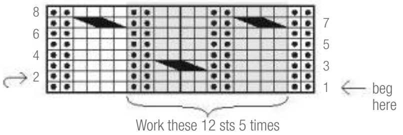
With right sides facing up and pieces side by side, insert wool needle from wrong side, between edge stitch and next stitch in first row. Insert needle from right side between same stitches on other piece then pass needle under 2 rows bringing it up to front again.

Insert wool needle down in same space that last stitch on first piece came out of, pass needle under 2 rows bringing it up to front as before.

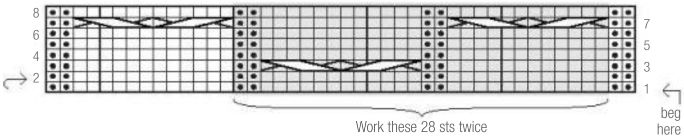
Swap from side to side always placing needle in same space that the last stitch came out of.

Do not pull too tightly – the seam should be as elastic as the knitting.

CABLE PATT A (worked over 68 sts)



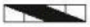
CABLE PATT B (worked over 72 sts)

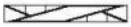


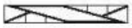
KEY – Shaded areas represent stitch repeats

☐ = Knit st on right side, purl st on wrong side.

● = Purl st on right side, knit st on wrong side.


= **C4F** – Slip next 2 sts onto cable needle and leave at front of work, K2, then K2 from cable needle.


= **C6B** – Slip next 3 sts onto cable needle and leave at back of work, K3, then K3 from cable needle.

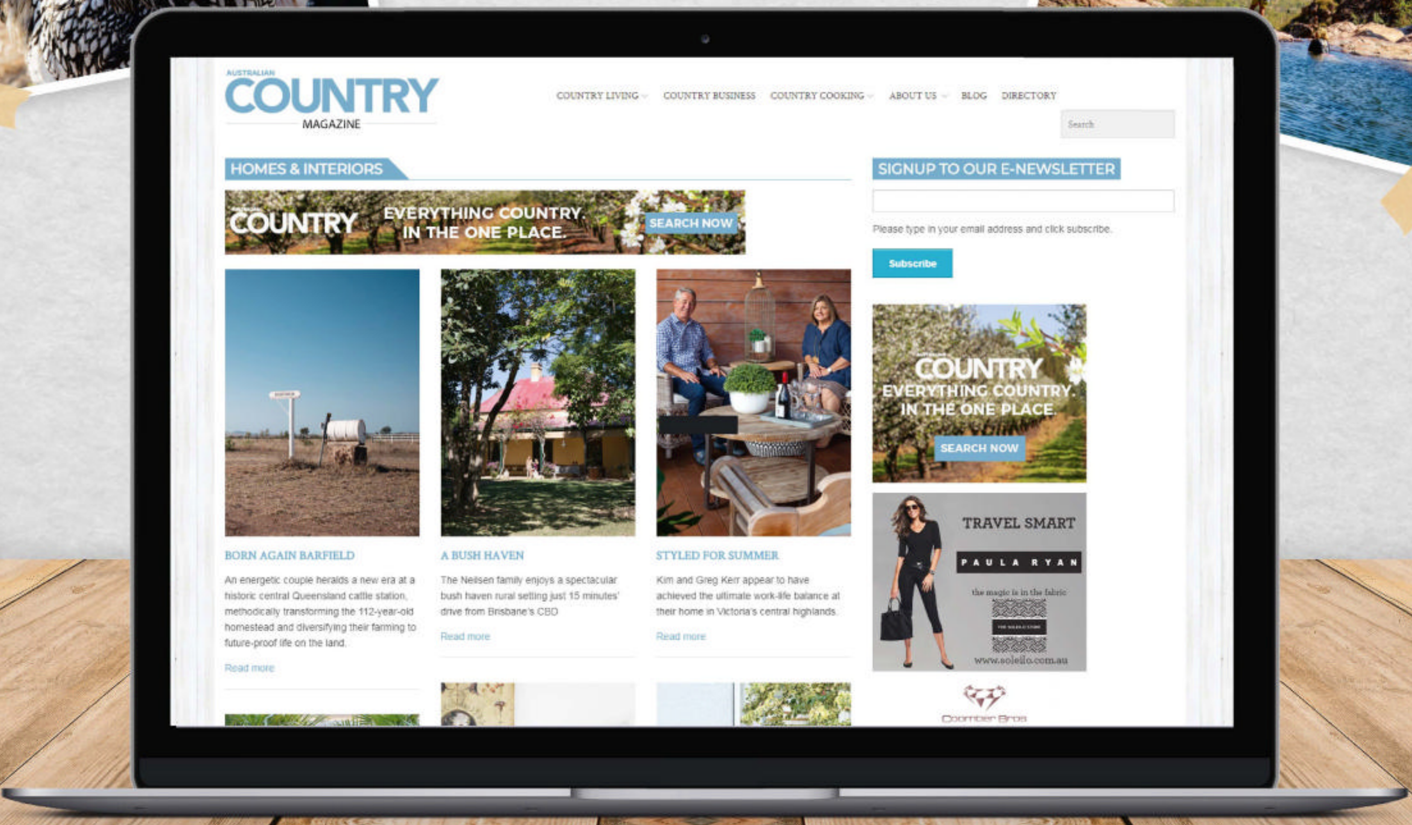

= **C6F** – Slip next 3 sts onto cable needle and leave at front of work, K3, then K3 from cable needle.

NOTE 1 – When working from graphs, read odd-numbered (right side) rows from right to left and even-numbered (wrong side) rows from left to right.

NOTE 2 – For each row, beg at edge and work to beg of rep, work rep number of times stated, then work rem sts as indicated.

Everything country.

IN THE ONE PLACE.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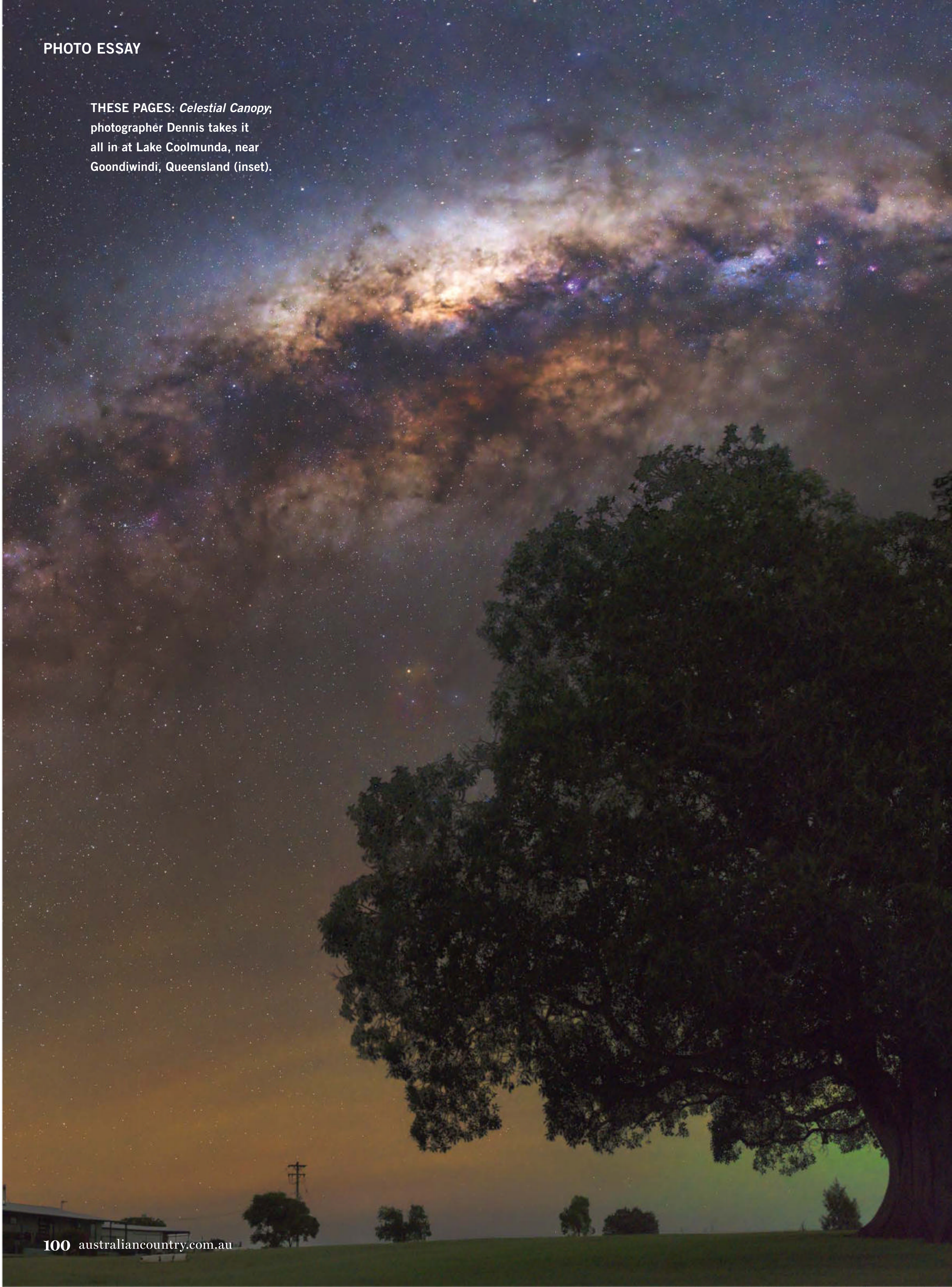


THESE PAGES: *Celestial Canopy*; photographer Dennis takes it all in at Lake Coolmunda, near Goondiwindi, Queensland (inset).

starry nights

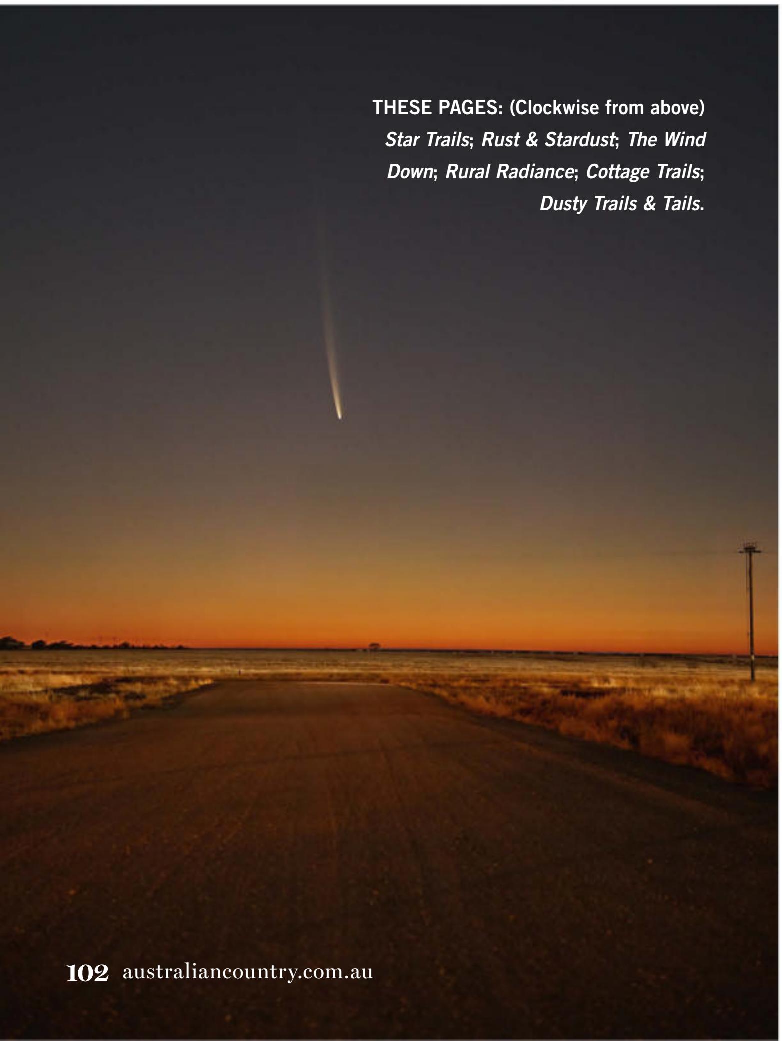
PATIENCE AND PASSION REWARD DENNIS MELLICAN WITH EXTRAORDINARY CAPTURES OF THE NIGHT SKY.

By day, Dennis is an IT consultant. His tech career has taken him from fixing the Y2K bug in London to startup roles in Silicon Valley. Now based in Brisbane, he dreams of working remotely from the country.

By night, Dennis is an amateur astrophotographer. What began with simple photos of the moon quickly evolved into a passion for astrophotography — capturing comets, auroras and the Milky Way stretching across rural landscapes.

You'll often find him around south-eastern Queensland regions of the Scenic Rim, Darling Downs, Burnett and the Northern Rivers of NSW. His favourite spot is Figtree Country Retreat in the Southern Downs, where he can both stay and explore the night sky in peace.

Self-taught and driven by curiosity, Dennis continues to refine his craft through experimentation and community. He has an astrophotograph currently exhibited at the Parkes Observatory, NSW, and recently at the Sydney Observatory. For Dennis, astrophotography is about patience, passion and reconnecting with the universe. As a way of giving back, he leads a free community project documenting locations to stargaze on thenightmap.com.



THESE PAGES: (Clockwise from above) *Star Trails*; *Rust & Stardust*; *The Wind Down*; *Rural Radiance*; *Cottage Trails*; *Dusty Trails & Tails.*

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bite-sized baking

RECIPE WRITER, PHOTOGRAPHER AND STYLIST TILLY PAMMENT DELIVERS MORE MORSELS OF JOY WITH HER LATEST COOKBOOK.

BABY CAKES

MAKES 12 CAKES

- 125g unsalted butter, softened
- 125g caster sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste
- 2 eggs
- 150g self-raising flour
- Pinch of fine sea salt
- 80ml full-cream milk

SWISS MERINGUE BUTTERCREAM

- 3 egg whites (approximately 100g)
- 200g caster sugar
- ⅛ teaspoon fine sea salt
- 300g unsalted butter, softened
- 1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste
- 160g strawberry and rhubarb jam (recipe follows), plus ½ teaspoon rosewater OR 160g passionfruit curd or 150g dark chocolate (45–55% cocoa solids) melted and cooled (optional)

OPTIONAL TOPPINGS

- Unsprayed edible flowers (dried or fresh)
- Extra passionfruit curd
- Chocolate shavings

Preheat the oven to 160°C fan-forced and line four 12-hole mini muffin/cupcake tins (with 30ml-capacity holes) with paper cases (or bake the cakes in batches if you have fewer tins).

For the cakes, in the bowl of a stand mixer with a paddle attachment, cream the butter, sugar and vanilla until very light and fluffy. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well and scraping down the side of the bowl after each addition.

Add half the flour and the salt to the creamed butter mixture, stirring gently, before adding half the milk. Once incorporated, follow with the remaining flour and the remaining milk, mixing gently until just combined.

Divide the batter between the prepared cupcake cases, filling to just over half full, and bake in the preheated oven for 8–12 minutes or until the cakes are golden and cooked through. Take care not to overbake as these tiny cakes cook very quickly. Allow the cakes to cool in their trays for 10 minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely.

When the cakes are cool, make the Swiss meringue buttercream by placing the egg whites, sugar and salt in a heatproof bowl set over a saucepan of gently simmering water, making sure the water doesn't touch the base of the bowl. Stir regularly with a flexible spatula until the sugar has dissolved and the egg whites are warm to the touch.

Remove from the heat and place the egg white and sugar mixture in the bowl of a stand mixer with a whisk attachment. Whisk on medium–high speed for 5–8 minutes or until the meringue mixture is thick and glossy and has cooled to room temperature.

Reduce the speed to low and whisk in the butter, a couple of tablespoons at a time. Continue to mix for a minute or so on low speed once all the butter has been incorporated, or until the mixture is glossy and smooth. When adding the butter to the meringue, there may be a point when the mixture looks like it has split or curdled — don't worry, this is quite normal and it should come back together as you continue to add the remaining butter and whisk on low speed.

Once the buttercream is smooth, add the vanilla and then either the strawberry and rhubarb jam and rosewater, the passionfruit curd or the melted chocolate, then fold through and mix gently, but thoroughly, until combined. Spoon or pipe the buttercream onto the cooled cakes and decorate as desired.

Store & share: While best eaten on the day they are made, these cakes will keep happily in an airtight container in the fridge for a day.

MALTED HAZELNUT BLONDIES

200g unsalted butter, cubed
110g golden (raw) caster sugar
110g light brown sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste
3 eggs
150g plain flour
¼ teaspoon fine sea salt
3 tablespoons (30g) malted milk powder
100g white chocolate, roughly chopped
100g store-bought chocolate hazelnut spread
50g hazelnuts, halved
Flaky sea salt, to sprinkle

Preheat the oven to 160°C fan-forced. Line the base and sides of a 20cm square cake tin with baking paper, leaving enough paper overhanging to help lift the cooked blondie out of the tin.

First, brown the butter by placing it in a saucepan over medium heat. Cook the butter, swirling the pan occasionally, until the butter has melted and starts to bubble rapidly. Once the bubbles slow and the butter starts to foam, watch carefully. When small brown flecks appear at the bottom of the pan, quickly remove from the heat and set the butter aside to cool slightly.

When the browned butter has cooled to warm, place the caster sugar, brown sugar, vanilla and eggs in a large mixing bowl and use a hand whisk to mix well. Whisk in the warm browned butter.

In a separate bowl, place the flour, salt and malted milk powder, mixing to combine. Fold the dry ingredients, along with half the chopped white chocolate, into the egg and sugar mixture. Pour the batter into the prepared tin, smoothing the top with a spatula. Gently dot the top of the blondie with the remaining white chocolate, spoonfuls of the chocolate hazelnut

spread and the chopped hazelnuts.

Sprinkle the surface with flaky sea salt and bake in the preheated oven for 25–35 minutes or until the surface of the blondie is set, but it is still a little wobbly in the middle. The blondie will continue to cook as it cools, and you want it to be a little soft inside.

Allow to cool completely in the tin before carefully lifting the blondie out and slicing. Serve at room temperature or warmed a little, with a bottomless pot of tea.

Store & share: Store any leftovers in an airtight container in a cool place for up to a week, or package up and post to a friend in need of sugar.

STRAWBERRY & RHUBARB JAM

500g strawberries, hulled and quartered
300g rhubarb, cut into 2cm pieces
440g caster sugar
125ml lemon juice (about 3–4 lemons)
1 vanilla bean, split and seeds scraped or 1 tablespoon vanilla bean paste
2 teaspoons rosewater (optional)

Preheat the oven to 180°C fan-forced. Place the strawberries, rhubarb, sugar, lemon juice and vanilla bean seeds and pod (or paste) in a large deep baking tray and mix well, making sure that no dry bits of sugar remain.

Spread the fruit out into an even layer and place the tray in the preheated oven to cook for 20 minutes, or until the fruit is bubbling around the edges of the tray. Carefully take the tray out of the oven and mash the fruit with a potato masher or fork.

Return the tray to the oven and cook for a further 15–20 minutes. Watch the jam carefully at this point as it can bubble over if it is cooked for too long. When the jam has reduced slightly and is bubbling and fragrant, carefully remove the tray from the oven. Give the jam another little mash, stir in the rosewater (if using), then ladle it into a sterilised jar and seal while hot.

Store & share: Unopened jam will keep for up to three months in a cool place. Once opened, store in the refrigerator and use within a month.

STRAWBERRY & RHUBARB JAM VICTORIA SPONGES

I am a total sucker for just about any version of a Victoria sponge. Plain cake, jam and cream — what more could you want? But make them little, individual Victorias and you really have my attention. The beauty of this recipe lies in its simplicity. These little cakes are made with cream, not butter, in the batter, meaning that you can mix them all in one bowl, by hand. And anything that gets me closer to a cake with less effort is a win in my book. Filling them with whipped yoghurt-cream and homemade jam really does make them sing, but any good jam you are in possession of will do the trick.

MAKES 6 CAKES
Unsalted butter, to grease
A little plain flour, to dust
200ml thick cream
165g caster sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste
2 eggs
150g self-raising flour
⅛ teaspoon fine sea salt

TO FILL
200ml thickened cream
100g Greek-style yoghurt
1 tablespoon icing sugar mixture, plus extra to dust
1 teaspoon rosewater
160g strawberry and rhubarb jam (recipe on previous page)

Preheat the oven to 160°C fan-forced and grease a 6-hole large muffin tin (with 180ml-capacity holes) well with softened butter. I have a tin with straight-sided cups, which looks lovely, but a regular large muffin tin works just as well. Dust the tin with a little plain flour, tapping out any excess. Make the cake batter by placing the cream, sugar and vanilla in a large mixing bowl and using a hand whisk to combine. Do not overmix or the cream will become too stiff. Add the eggs, one at a time, whisking after each addition. Add the self-raising flour and salt to the bowl and whisk briefly to form a smooth batter. Divide the batter evenly between the prepared tins, smoothing the tops with a spatula and tapping the tins gently on the bench to remove any air bubbles. Bake in the preheated oven for 15–20 minutes or until the cakes have risen and are cooked through. Allow the cakes to cool in their tins for 10 minutes before carefully turning them out onto a wire rack to cool completely. When ready to assemble the cakes, make the filling by whipping the cream, yoghurt, sugar and rosewater to soft peaks. Split the cakes in half and top the bottom halves with a generous scoop of the cream mixture. Use the back of a spoon to create a little nest in the cream, then place a spoonful of jam on top. Gently sandwich the tops of the cakes on and dust liberally with icing sugar.

STORE & SHARE: These cakes are best served soon after assembling.

CHOCOLATE HAZELNUT TARTS

Chocolate and hazelnut, a well-loved classic for good reason. When I was testing recipes for this book, I spent a busy couple of weeks staying at my parents' house — filling their table (and their neighbours) with sweet baked goods. They looked after the kids, I fed everyone too much sugar and the oven was never turned off. When we left, I squirrelled away two of these little beauties at the back of the fridge for Dad. Mum promptly found them and generously gifted them to a friend who had dropped in for tea. Dad was devastated. At which stage I knew I could stop testing them — they could go in the book. Sorry Dad, maybe Mum will make you a batch now?

MAKES 10 SMALL TARTS
½ quantity short sweet pastry (recipe follows), rested
Plain flour, for dusting
60g hazelnuts
Thick cream, to serve (optional)

CHOCOLATE FILLING
125ml pure cream
1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste
180g dark chocolate (45–55% cocoa solids), roughly chopped
2 tablespoons caster sugar
100g sour cream
1 egg, lightly beaten
Pinch of fine sea salt

Preheat the oven to 170°C fan-forced and place 10 loose-bottomed tart tins with a base measurement of 6cm, 2cm deep, on a baking tray. First, prepare the tart shells by cutting your rested pastry log into 10 equal rounds. Working with one piece at a time, scrunch each round in your hand once or twice to make the pastry malleable, then roll into a ball. Place on a lightly floured work surface and, using a rolling pin, roll each ball out to a 10–12cm circle (about 3mm thick). Gently ease the rolled pastry rounds into the tins, pressing the pastry snugly into the base and up the side of each tin. If the pastry has warmed up a lot, refrigerate the tart shells for 30 minutes before baking. Use a small sharp knife to trim off any excess pastry from around the rim of the tarts, then place a square of baking paper or foil into each pastry shell. Fill with baking beads and place in the oven to bake for 20–25 minutes, until golden all over. Remove from the oven and allow the tart shells to cool with the baking beads in them. (This step can be done the day before you want to serve the tarts — just store the cooked, cooled tart shells in an airtight container.) Lower the oven temperature to 130°C. Place the hazelnuts on a small baking tray and bake for 5–8 minutes, or until they are fragrant and the skins will slip off the nuts. Place the nuts in a clean tea towel and rub together to remove most of the skins — it doesn't really matter if a bit of the skin stays on. Set aside.

While the tart shells and nuts are cooling, make the chocolate filling by heating the cream and vanilla in a small saucepan until just below a simmer. Remove from the heat and add the chocolate to the pan. Allow the mixture to sit for a minute or two to melt the chocolate before using a small whisk to mix until smooth. Mix in the sugar, followed by the sour cream, then the egg and salt, whisking until smooth. When the tart shells are cool, remove the baking paper and baking beads. Divide the chocolate filling evenly among the tarts, and top with the roasted hazelnuts. Bake in the oven for 12–18 minutes or until the surface of the chocolate filling is set, but is still a little wobbly in the centre. The filling will continue to cook as it cools. Allow the tarts to cool in their tins before carefully turning them out and serving with a spoonful of cream, if you like.

Store & share: While best eaten on the day they are made, these little tarts will keep happily in an airtight container in the fridge for two to three days — just return to room temperature before serving. Share with good friends only, and don't forget to save one for your dad!

SHORT SWEET PASTRY

MAKES APPROXIMATELY 650G

200g unsalted butter, softened
40g icing sugar mixture
1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste
1 egg, lightly beaten
350g plain flour
¼ teaspoon fine sea salt

Place the softened butter in the bowl of a stand mixer with a paddle attachment and mix on low speed until smooth. Add the sugar and vanilla and mix again until well combined. You're not looking for a light and fluffy texture here, just a uniformly creamy consistency. Add the egg and continue to beat, now on medium speed, until the mixture comes together, scraping down the side of the bowl once or twice. It can take a few minutes for the egg to incorporate, especially if your kitchen is cold, so just take your time here. Add the flour and salt to the bowl and mix on low speed until the pastry just comes together. Tip the whole lot out onto a clean work surface and gently bring the pastry and any loose flour together with your hands. Squish and knead ever so slightly until smooth, then divide the pastry in two. Roll each portion into a little fat log. Wrap well and place in the fridge to chill for an hour or two (or up to two days), or until the pastry is firm enough to work with. If your pastry has been in the fridge for longer than a couple of hours, leave it out at room temperature for 30–60 minutes before using as directed in the recipe.

Perfect bite-sized bakes
Handfuls of Sunshine
TILLY PAMMENT
Author of The Plain Cake Appreciation Society

Images and text from *Handfuls of Sunshine* by Tilly Pamment, photography by Tilly Pamment. Murdoch Books, RRP $39.99.

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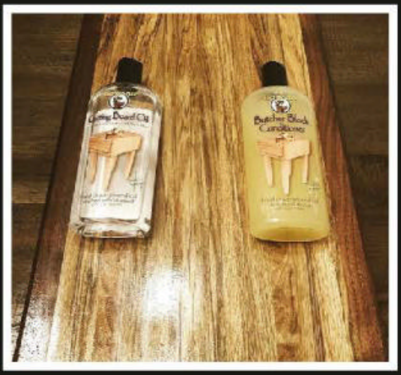

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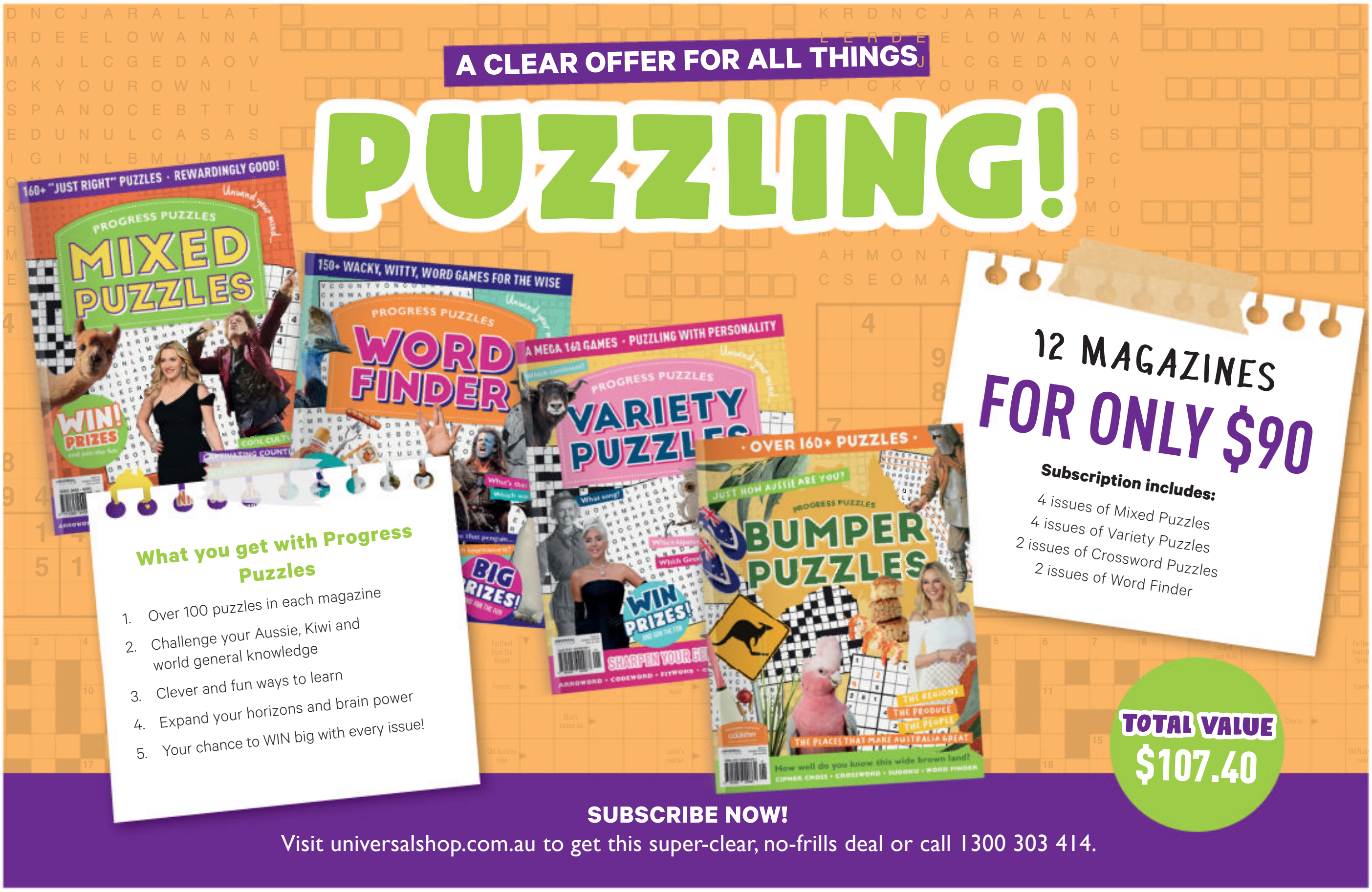

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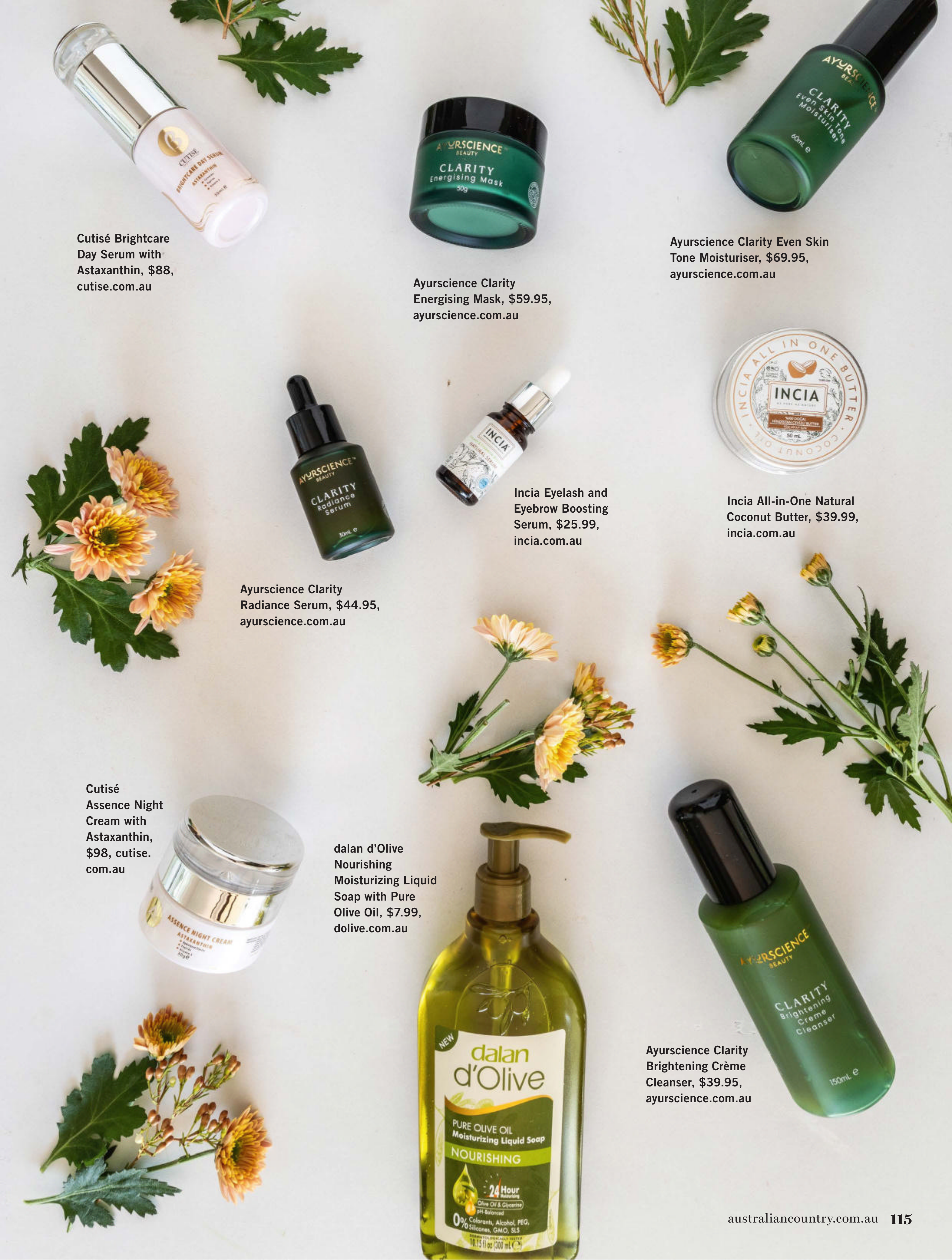

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Ayurscience Clarity Radiance Serum, $44.95, ayurscience.com.au

Incia Eyelash and Eyebrow Boosting Serum, $25.99, incia.com.au

Incia All-in-One Natural Coconut Butter, $39.99, incia.com.au

Cutisé Assence Night Cream with Astaxanthin, $98, cutise.com.au

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Ayurscience Clarity Brightening Crème Cleanser, $39.95, ayurscience.com.au

store strolling

COMPILED BY STEPHANIE ZHANG

THINGS WE LOVE THAT YOU ARE BOUND TO WANT IN YOUR LIFE.

GLENVIEW PRODUCTS
This Antiqued Equatorial sundial certainly makes a statement. It's configured for the Southern Hemisphere, as many others on the market are not suitable for use in Australia. Being made of cast brass makes it non-rusting and it will develop a patina, which further enhances its look and character. They range in price from $385 to $875, depending on the size and weight. glenviewproducts.com.au

THOMAS COOK
The shower-proof Dusty Pure Fur Felt hat, $319.95, is made from premium pure rabbit fur felt with a genuine horsehair tassel, detachable feather, fully lined crown, leather sweatband and Thomas Cook metal logo pin. thomascook.com.au

CRUMBLE
Indulge in healthy cooking every day with the Crumble air fryer, $429. Its elegant design sits beautifully on the countertop and complements any kitchen aesthetic. Its capacity is six litres, large enough to roast a chicken and, unlike most air fryers, it's made from carbon steel, meaning no nasty plastic smells. crumble.co

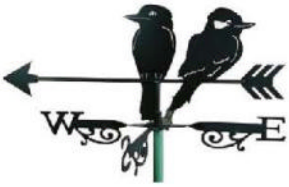
OTWAY FOOTWEAR
The Otway Workman low boots, $174.95, have been designed for the everyday Aussie outdoor enthusiast — from farmer to fisherman, these are the ultimate waterproof utility boot. With a 100 per cent waterproof rubber upper, pull tabs for easy on/off and a soft neoprene lining for comfort and warmth, you can take them anywhere. otwayfootwear.com.au

LOVE IN A BOTTLE
Love in Milkshake, $24.99, by Love In A Bottle is a creamy, mood-lifting fragrance with top notes of vanilla bean and cacao, a heart of dark chocolate and coffee, and a soft musky base. Deliciously nostalgic and irresistibly smooth, it's like sipping a milkshake on a warm summer's day. loveinabottle.com.au

LUME OUTDOOR LIVING
Experience comfort and relaxation outdoors with the Lyon teak lounge, $4999. This four-piece outdoor lounge is crafted from high-quality, reclaimed teak for durability and longevity. It seats up to four people, making it perfect for entertaining guests or enjoying family time. lumeoutdoorliving.com.au

INCLINIC COSMETICS
InClinic's Illuminating Baked Mineral Powder, $55, comes in four glow-enhancing shades — Perla, Bella, Mia, and Isola. This oil-free, non-comedogenic formula blends luminous pigments with rice powder, vitamins and coconut extract to control shine, hydrate and brighten the complexion. A weightless, skin-loving highlighter that won't clog pores or cause breakouts. inclinic.com.au

HOWARD PRODUCTS
Keep your cutting boards and butcher blocks in top shape with Howard Products Cutting Board Oil, $36.30. It deeply penetrates to moisturise, protect and extend the life of wood surfaces. Don't use oils that could go rancid, use Howard Products Cutting Board Oil. Safe, odourless and easy to use, it's essential care for every kitchen's woodware. howardproducts.com.au



GLENVIEW PRODUCTS
The kookaburra weathervane is just one of Glenview Products' Australian-made weathervanes featuring Australian birds and animals. They are made from hard-wearing stainless steel and are priced from $325 to $380. glenviewproducts.com.au

DAVID ROCHE GALLERY
The pocket mirror, $20, is a beautiful floral pocket mirror that makes an ideal gift for a friend or family member. The image, attributed to Derby Porcelain Factory, is of a plaque (still life of flowers) from the early 19th century, and it's made from porcelain and polychrome enamel. rochegallery.com.au

DOWNUNDER MAGNESIUM
The Magnesium Super Stick, $55, is a natural, highly concentrated topical formula designed to target skin concerns such as scars, acne, sunspots and blemishes. Its powerful formula promotes skin renewal and visibly reduces imperfections, supporting healthy regeneration without irritation. Quick-drying and non-scarring, it's ideal for smoothing uneven or problematic skin. downundermagnesium.com.au

EUREKA HEATING
The Eureka radiant heaters, $1915-$3456, are sleek and efficient. The Jade, Amber and Jasper radiant wood heaters are designed for high ceilings or poorly insulated homes. With firebrick lining, dual baffle systems, Boost Air ignition (Amber and Jasper) and a cast-iron door, they deliver fast, powerful warmth with a clean, modern look. eurekaheating.com.au

CUTISÉ
Cutisé's Assence Night Cream, $98, is a rich, velvety treatment that firms, hydrates and smooths skin overnight. Powered by gentle retinoids, dual peptides, marine actives and antioxidant astaxanthin, it boosts collagen renewal, defends against oxidative stress and improves elasticity. Skin feels nourished, replenished and visibly rejuvenated. cutise.com.au

THOMAS COOK
The Women's Janet dress boot, $189.95, is made from oil-treated leather upper and has leather and synthetic linings, a full-tread rubber sole, heavy-weight elastic sides, polyurethane comfort branded innersole and a Thomas Cook embossed heel logo. thomascook.com.au

OCEA CLEAN
The Ocea Clean Complete Cleaning kit, $56, makes low-tox living effortless, with plant-powered formulas that are tough on grime yet safe for the whole family. Featuring refillable bottles, concentrated tablets and reusable cloths, this kit delivers everything you need for a cleaner, healthier home — without waste, harsh chemicals or unnecessary extras. oceaclean.com

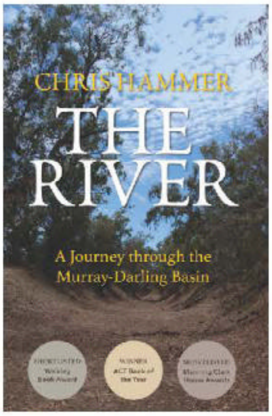
HOWARD PRODUCTS
FixStix by Howard Products, $22, is the quick, no-mess solution for repairing scratches, gouges and nail holes in wood. Simply rub it in, buff off and watch flaws disappear. Perfect for furniture, cabinets and trims. howardproducts.com.au

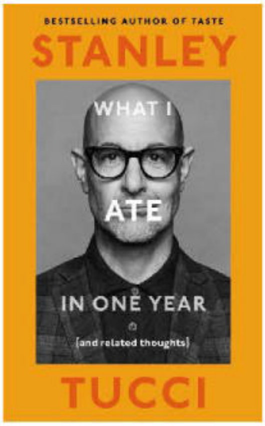
CRUMBLE
Meet the bestselling Classic Round Dutch oven, $429. Incredibly versatile, easy to clean and completely oven safe. Not only will you love how it looks in your kitchen, but also how perfectly it roasts, braises, fries, bakes and so much more. crumble.co

VITIS V
Vitis V Face TonIQ, $140, is a nutrient-dense, bioactive botanical blend crafted from unfermented grapeseed oil and white grapeseed extract. Cold-pressed and antioxidant-rich, it restores, rebalances and revitalises the skin. Lightweight and unscented, it's vegan, cruelty-free and bottled in the Barossa Valley — free from water, fragrance, preservatives and synthetic additives. vitisv.com.au

off the shelf

COMPILED BY KIRSTY MCKENZIE





Perfect bite-sized bakes
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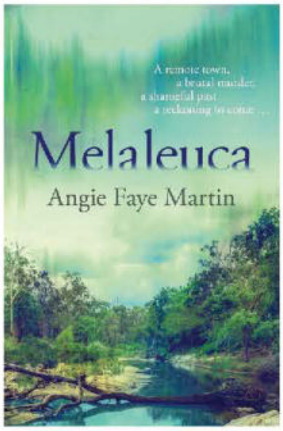
TILLY PAMMENT


A remote town, a brutal murder, a shameful past, a reckoning to come . . .
Melaleuca
Angie Faye Martin

THE RIVER

Chris Hammer, Melbourne University Press, $36.99

Long before he was an acclaimed crime-fiction author, Chris Hammer was a political and environmental journalist. In 2008-2009, he left his Canberra desk to explore one of the most complex issues of our time, the management of water in this country, with a particular focus on the Murray-Darling basin. It's a testament to his skill as a writer that Chris was able to turn this very serious subject into an absorbing read, first published in 2010. Fifteen years down the track, the impact of water distribution and use on the wildlife and people who depend on it for their survival is as pressing as ever.

WHAT I ATE IN ONE YEAR

Stanley Tucci, Penguin Random House Australia, $45

It redefined surreal to read Stanley Tucci's description of the meals he ate, even the lunches he made, during the eight weeks he spent in Rome while filming the movie, *Conclave,* at the very time the eight-times Oscar-nominated film was being screened in our cinemas. The reader learns how much Stanley misses his family and friends — many of them including famous actors, such as his sister-in-law Emily Blunt, and directors — back in London and, as the year progresses, the joyful gatherings they share. The book also provides sneak peeks into the Tucci family's domestic life, including their holiday pantry — no prizes for guessing there are several boxes of tomatoes, gallons of olive oil, three kilos of risotto rice and a cocktail shaker, all essential for a group of six adults, four children and assorted day visitors for a week in the country.

HANDFULS OF SUNSHINE

Tilly Pamment, Murdoch Books $39.99

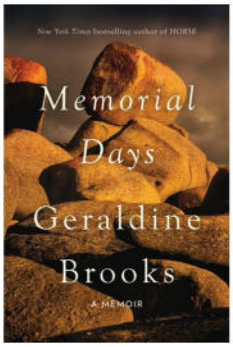
Recipe writer, photographer and stylist Tilly Pamment shares the joys of small cakes, biscuits, slices and tarts in her latest cookbook. As always, the handful-sized treats are beautifully presented, with exquisite flowers and settings adding appeal. What's not to love about Peach and Custard Cream Tarts, Sour Cherry, Pistachio and Rose Rocky Road, and Date and Ginger Scones?

MELALEUCA

Angie Faye Martin, HQ Fiction, $34.99

Unputdownable. If it's not a word, then is should be — particularly in reference to Angie Faye Martin's debut novel, which is set in a fictional country town not unlike Oakey, where she grew up. It also draws inspiration from Charleville in south-western Queensland, where the author's father grew up on the yumba (Aboriginal fringe camp). As a proud Kooma-Kamilaroi woman, Angie's story tells of a First Nations police officer, who comes home to support her ageing mother, but finds herself the lead in a brutal murder case that links back to the tragic disappearance of two young women 30 years previously. The story races between the two time frames and deals with some uncomfortable issues regarding race and authority that remain as relevant today as they were in the 1960s.

KARLY LANE'S 25TH STUNNING RURAL ROMANCE
KARLY LANE
Needle in a Haystack


New York Times bestselling author of HORSE
Memorial Days
Geraldine Brooks
A MEMOIR

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF Betty
AN ORDINARY EXTRAORDINARY WOMAN
DEBRA OSWALD

NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK

Karly Lane, Allen & Unwin, $32.99

This is Karly Lane's 25th rural romance and it's hard to conceive how she keeps coming up with fresh plots that never fail to intrigue and delight her dedicated readers. Country town antiques dealer and amateur historian Lottie Fairchild is also on the organising committee for an upcoming festival that celebrates a local bushranger. Sparks fly when Professor Damian Loxley — the guest of honour for the event — rides into town on his motorbike and turns out to be not quite the stuffy academic everyone was expecting. Lottie and the professor embark on a deep dive into some mysteries of the past and, naturally, romance blossoms.

MEMORIAL DAYS

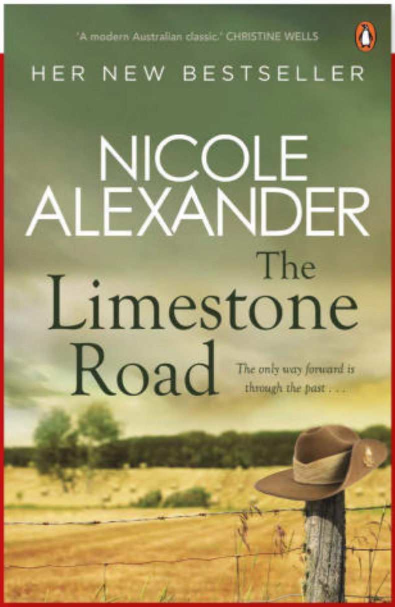
Geraldine Brooks, Hachette Australia, $32.99

On Memorial Day 2019, Pulitzer Prize-winning, Australian-born, American-resident, author Geraldine Brooks learnt that her husband, journalist Tony Horwitz, collapsed and died on a New York street in the middle of his own book tour. In the busyness of the immediate aftermath and the longer-term life readjustment, Geraldine realised she had not taken time to grieve. Three years later, she retreats to remote Flinders Island in Bass Strait to come to terms with what has happened and her great sense of loss. The result is a beautiful memoir, an ode to a life and love cut short and all the pain and joy that remembering it brings.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF BETTY

Debra Oswald, Allen & Unwin, $34.99

As she approaches her late 90s, Betty has seen and done it all. A world war, the chance of a better life in Australia, an ill-matched marriage to a wealthy businessman, anti-war protests and the emergence of the women's movement, the AIDS crisis, new love in Mexico and a career as a TV screenwriter. Throughout it all, Betty remains an endearing force of nature, and playwright, novelist and screenwriter Debra Oswald has used all her superpowers of observation to tell Betty's story with her trademark candour, wit and warmth.


'A modern Australian classic.' CHRISTINE WELLS
HER NEW BESTSELLER
NICOLE ALEXANDER
The Limestone Road
The only way forward is through the past . . .

THE LIMESTONE ROAD

Nicole Alexander, Penguin Random House Australia, $34.99

Nicole Alexander has a masters degree in creative writing and lives in country NSW, so she speaks from a place of deep knowledge and empathy for her characters in her rural historical novels. *The Limestone Road* is her 12th book and a welcome addition to the library. It explores the journey of a father and son recently returned to South Australia's Limestone Coast after WWII. Both are nursing the scars of war as they navigate the challenges of farming, the chance to make wine from an abandoned vineyard and build fresh futures and relationships on the land.

mailbag

THANKS FOR BEING IN TOUCH. WE WELCOME YOUR FEEDBACK.

LAST ISSUE GENERATED LOTS OF FEEDBACK FROM OUR READERS.

Perfect bite-sized bakes
Handfuls of Sunshine
TILLY PAMMENT
Author of The Plain Cake Appreciation Society

WIN A PRIZE

We appreciate your thoughts and in each issue, one correspondent wins a prize. Simply email Kirsty at kmckenzie@umco.com.au or write to us at Australian Country, Locked Bag 154, North Ryde NSW 1670. We reserve the right to edit lengthy letters before publication. Our favourite correspondent next issue will win a copy of Tilly Pamment's beautiful new cookbook, *Handfuls of Sunshine* from our friends at Murdoch Books. Just send us your thoughts on the magazine and life in general to be in the running for this wonderful prize.

SHARING STORIES

Thank you so much for the fabulous article in the most recent copy of *Australian Country*. You really captured the essence of our new life. Ken's photos were fabulous. **Janine Cullen, Tuckombil NSW**

TO A TEA

Your cover story about Carina Chambers and her life on farm in NSW summed up all that we aim for in our home on a small farm in regional Victoria. The garden setting for the afternoon tea has inspired me to host an event of my own, with proceeds going to the Cancer Council's Australia's Biggest Morning Tea. **Kate Wright, Heathcote Vic**

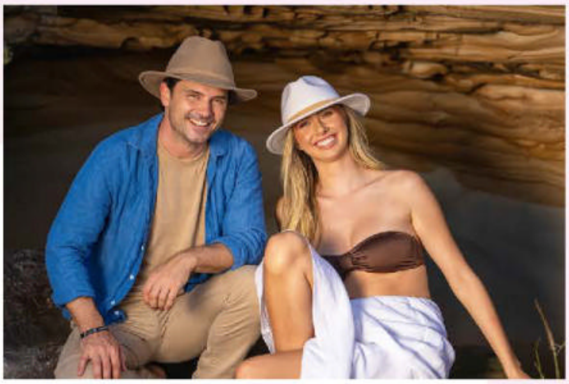
ACROSS THE DITCH

I was surprised to see two stories from New Zealand in your recent issue, as I didn't think it was part of your remit, even though they were interesting features. **Clare Jenkins, Adelaide SA**

Ed's note: As so many of our readers love to travel, New Zealand is such a close neighbour and there are so many Kiwis living in Australia, we like to include our friends across the ditch from time to time.

And the winner is...

JANINE CULLEN, TUCKOMBIL NSW, WHO WINS WIN A HAT FROM OUR FRIENDS AT OOGEE.



COUNTRY
Real stories from the heartland

Editor Kirsty McKenzie
email kmckenzie@umco.com.au
Contributors Bronte Camilleri,
Phoebe Hartley
Photography Ken Brass, Dennis Mellican,
Dylan Ridsdale, Tiffany Warner,
Pip Williams, Ross Williams
Advertising Rob Jordan
mobile 0411 424 196
email rjordan@umco.com.au
Advertising David Strong
mobile 0411 424 072
email dstrong@umco.com.au
Advertising Production Co-ordinator
Stephanie Zhang
Publisher Janice Williams
For Subscriptions and Mail Orders
phone 1300 303 414
Circulation Enquiries to our Sydney
head office (02) 9805 0399

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Chairman/CEO Prema Perera
Publisher Janice Williams
Chief Financial Officer Vicky Mahadeva
Associate Publisher Emma Perera
Circulation Business Development Manager Mark McTaggart

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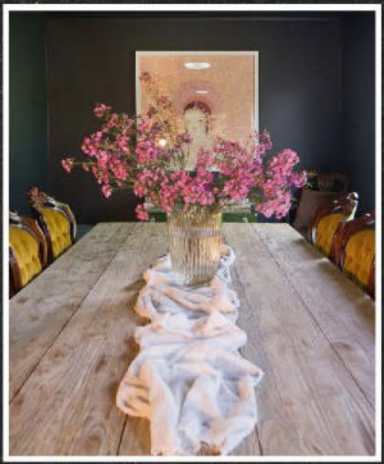

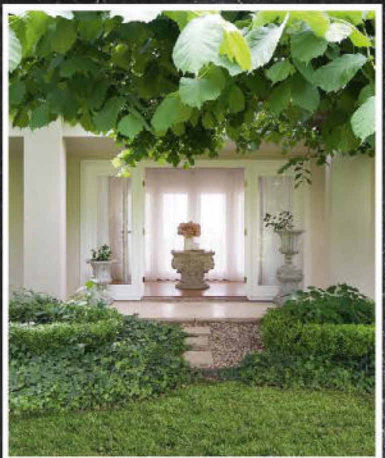

FOR OUR NEXT ISSUE ...

Our next issue's travels begin on the Victorian side of the Murray River where Josie Pollifrone and her husband Anthony live surrounded by vineyards near Mildura. We also meet NSW artist and sculptor Regina Law at her bushland home and studio on Sydney's south-western periphery and travel to the NSW mid-north coast to visit the prolific and always entertaining rural romance author Karly Lane. Our travel feature focuses on Maria Island and its extraordinary wildlife off the east coast of Tasmania and the issue is packed with gardening, design and decorating inspiration. So please join us for

AUSTRALIAN COUNTRY 28.5,
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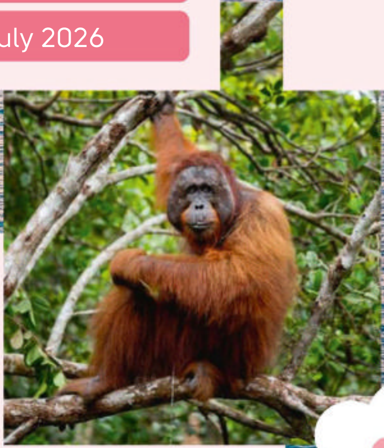

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